



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 368
Thursday, November 7, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 7, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(5) of the Auditor General Act, the fall 2024 reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), these reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to three petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

HON. MURRAY SINCLAIR

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, November 4, Murray Sinclair passed away. Most Canadians will remember Murray as the chairperson for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which launched in 2009, and so they should. The work of the commission was monumental and profound. The commission, through Murray Sinclair's leadership, shone a light on the racist, colonial residential school system and all of its devastating effects, which indigenous people are still suffering through today. However, more than that, the final report of the commission offered solutions,

calls to action, and those calls to action will guide Canada's reconciliation efforts for generations.

I remember Murray Sinclair from my time as a youth worker at the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre in Winnipeg. Murray was the husband of Katherine, who played a leadership role in the management of the centre, and he would sometimes come around, mostly for social functions such as Christmas parties and other celebrations. He stood out. He was a first nations lawyer, and he was a damned good one.

I had a chance to connect with him on those occasions, and connect with people is what Murray Sinclair did, all people, especially young people. He connected with me on the importance of getting involved, of not being afraid to advocate for what one believes in and, most of all, of being proud of who one is and where one comes from. For a young, uneducated, poor Métis man in the mid-eighties, the example he set and the message he sent were extremely powerful.

Murray Sinclair would go on to serve as co-commissioner of the provincial aboriginal justice inquiry in the late eighties. The purpose of the inquiry was to examine the issues plaguing the relationship between the indigenous people of Manitoba and the justice system of Manitoba, including police services. It was there that Murray Sinclair really rose to the occasion. He played an incisive role, a crucial role, in shining a light on the racist policies of the Winnipeg Police Service and the Manitoba justice system. The inquiry shone an intense and powerful light on indigenous-police relations in the city of Winnipeg, and those issues are still around today.

Of course, Murray Sinclair played other very important roles in his legal career, which are too numerous to mention. He was also appointed a senator here in 2016 and served until 2021. It was during this period that we were able to connect again semi-regularly on the plane from Winnipeg to Ottawa or from Ottawa to Winnipeg, when I had the opportunity to sit beside him for a couple of hours. We had some intense, enlightening discussions on reconciliation, on Manitoba issues and on Canadian issues. It was a real privilege to walk to his office in East Block and consult with Senator Sinclair on a wide array of reconciliation issues. There was absolutely nobody more knowledgeable, kinder and wiser to chat with at that time. I will always cherish and always remember those times.

Tributes

Finally, Murray Sinclair was my Facebook friend and my daughter's Facebook friend. It always warmed my heart when I read posts on my daughter's site encouraging her and telling her to be positive, whether it was on education issues, university issues or her days as an activist. Murray had the ability to connect with all people, not only on social media, of course, but in real life, and especially young people. He was positive. He encouraged people to get involved and try to make their communities a better place.

● (1005)

My absolute personal favourite is when Murray Sinclair would comment on my daughter's Facebook page about how precious and beautiful my granddaughter, Tennessee Bone, is. It warmed my heart because obviously it is true. He had an ability to connect.

Murray Sinclair, Mazina Giizhik, was an extraordinary leader. He was a teacher and a fighter for social justice, among many other things, which are too numerous to mention. He will be sorely missed.

Rest in peace, Murray.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of His Majesty's loyal opposition and the Conservative Party of Canada, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in celebration of the remarkable life and achievements of a true champion of justice and reconciliation, the Hon. Murray Sinclair. As a distinguished lawyer, senator and the first indigenous person to serve as chief justice of the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, Murray Sinclair's journey is a testament to the power of resilience, advocacy and vision.

Born in 1951 in a small community of St. Peter's, Manitoba, Murray Sinclair faced the challenges of growing up as a member of the Selkirk First Nation. His early experiences instilled in him a profound understanding of the injustices faced by indigenous peoples in Canada. Rather than being deterred, he channelled his experiences into a lifelong commitment to advocacy and change.

Murray Sinclair's educational path was nothing short of inspiring. He obtained his law degree from the University of Manitoba in 1979, becoming one of the first indigenous lawyers in Canada. His legal career quickly flourished, marked by significant roles that would shape his legacy. As a founding member of the aboriginal justice inquiry of Manitoba, he laid the groundwork for crucial discussions about justice reform and the need for a system that respects indigenous rights.

However, it was his role as the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that truly brought him to the forefront of the national consciousness. Appointed in 2009, he led the commission with grace and determination, guiding the nation through the painful history of residential schools. The TRC's report, released in 2015, provided not only a comprehensive account of the injustices faced by indigenous children, but also a road map for reconciliation, one that calls for understanding, respect and the restoration of relationships.

Murray Sinclair's work has had a profound impact on countless lives. His tireless advocacy for education, justice, and health equality for indigenous peoples has inspired a new generation of leaders. As he stated, "Education is the key to reconciliation" and "Educa-

tion got us into this mess and education will get us out of it." He has challenged Canadians to confront their history, embrace the truth and work together toward a more inclusive future.

As a senator appointed in 2016, Justice Sinclair continued to champion indigenous rights and issues, ensuring that the voices of indigenous people were heard in the highest halls of power. His legislative efforts have sought to address systemic inequalities and promote the policies that foster genuine reconciliation.

Beyond his formal roles, Murray Sinclair has been a mentor, role model and beacon of hope to many. His words have resonated with many. He has encouraged all Canadians to engage in learning about indigenous cultures, history and rights, reminding us that understanding is the first step toward healing.

Today, as we reflect on Murray Sinclair's incredible contributions, let us not only honour his legacy, but also commit ourselves to the principles that he has championed over his lifetime. Let us strive for a Canada where respect, understanding and reconciliation are at the heart of the national identity.

Of course, the accolades have been flowing in. Here are just a few of the reflections on the life and contributions of Murray Sinclair as others saw him.

Governor General Mary Simon said, "We are deeply saddened by the loss of a friend and prominent leader in Canada who championed human rights, justice and truth".

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs said that Murray Sinclair "broke barriers and inspired countless individuals to pursue reform and justice with courage and determination."

Winnipeg's mayor, Scott Gillingham, called Sinclair a true "leader in justice, reconciliation, and education." He also said, "His passing feels especially sad because the journey he started is still ongoing, with much work ahead."

The Southern Chiefs' Organization of Manitoba said this of the hon. senator:

Murray was a beloved father and grandfather, husband, friend and colleague. On behalf of SCO, we extend our deepest heartfelt condolences to the loved ones of the Honourable Murray Sinclair, and the many who will mourn his loss.

We wish him a safe journey to the Spirit World.

● (1010)

Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor, Anita R. Neville, stated:

A true visionary leader and a man for all people, the impact of his work will continue to create positive change that will resonate throughout Canada and the world for generations to come.

He was pure of heart, an inspiration, a trusted friend.

In closing, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the hon. Murray Sinclair for his unwavering dedication, his wisdom and his profound humanity.

I also wish to extend condolences to his family and friends.

May he rest in peace.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we mourn the passing of the Hon. Murray Sinclair on Monday, November 4. This former lawyer, judge and senator was best known for his role as the chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

After graduating from law school in 1979, the Hon. Murray Sinclair was called to the Manitoba Bar in 1980 and went on to become Manitoba's first indigenous judge, appointed in 1988. He was then called to sit on the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, the province's highest trial court, in 2001.

While law was at the heart of his professional career, it was his work defending the interests and values of the Anishinabe people, his people, that earned him a place in history. In 1988, he co-chaired the Public Inquiry into the Administration of Justice and Aboriginal People in Manitoba. More importantly, in 2009, after initially refusing, he agreed to chair Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He was eventually called to serve in the Senate of Canada on April 2, 2016, until his retirement on January 31, 2021.

On December 29, 2021, he was made a Companion of the Order of Canada in recognition of his expertise in indigenous rights and his efforts to foster reconciliation between Canada's indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

Murray Sinclair, whose Anishinabe name was Mazina Giizhik, held a place of honour in the indigenous community. Tributes are pouring in from across the country, mourning his loss and praising his life. He is being called a mentor, a guide, a champion and a kind-hearted giant, but he also a person who would confront people and light our path through the darkness. He was clearly a man of significance. I did not have the privilege of knowing him, but had I had that chance, I would have found it an honour and a pleasure. The indigenous community and politicians of all stripes are paying tribute to him today, and a well-earned tribute at that.

Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak, the chief of the Assembly of First Nations, says that she has lost a guide and a mentor, adding that he was born at a time when first nations members did not have the right to vote. He rose to become one of the most decorated and influential figures in the field of justice and defence of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Inuit Senator Michèle Audette said, "he was always present. Even when he was ill and not doing well, he made himself available to coach me. He was a mentor until his last breath, and that was so valuable to me." Betsy Kennedy, acting grand chief of Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, said, "today, we mourn the loss of a hero whose vision and leadership continue to guide us forward. The Honourable Murray Sinclair's tireless commitment to justice and

Tributes

truth has left a permanent mark on our nations and communities, and we carry his light as we strive for the betterment of our Nations."

Lastly, former federal justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould mourned the passing of her "mentor, friend and colleague", adding, "I will always cherish his wisdom and celebrate his distinct contributions to Indigenous peoples and to Canada."

Speaking for myself and the Bloc Québécois, today I salute this great man and offer our sincerest condolences to his family, to his friends and to all the peoples that comprise the great First Nations.

• (1020)

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to speak on behalf of the NDP to honour a great human being, Murray Sinclair, a mentor and a hero who had a profoundly kind and wise ability to cut through colonial noise to shine the truth on Canada's colonial history. This was a daunting task at a time where there was growing denialism about the horrors and genocide that occurred at the residential schools. He listened to the stories and internalized and carried the pain of thousands of survivors, defending and honouring their truths, which he shared with the rest of the world.

He knew that reconciliation and the decolonization of Canada would be met with obstacles, yet he never quit moving forward to help everyone across Canada to develop a collective understanding of truth, calling out those in power to act and to reflect to ensure that truth would shine through the darkness. As he stated in an interview with Brett Forester in January 2021:

The people who believe that they have the privilege of holding power and should continue to have that privilege, they're going to push back.... They're going to fight against reconciliation. They're the deniers of this story. They're going to say this never happened. That the schools were all about education and the Indians should be thankful that they got an education.

He went on to say, "Schools were never about education, schools were always about forced assimilation and indoctrination, and we need to call it for what it is."

He persisted in his calls for us to do better, to reflect on how our need to protect our own privilege and power impeded our ability to reconcile in this country. He did it in such a way as to help build a collective understanding of the colonization of Canada. I am truly grateful to him for his strength to share truth, especially for survivors who continue to suffer in silence as a result of the abuses they experienced in the schools.

He gifted Canada with a path through 94 calls to action to lead towards reconciliation. We have that path forward, which he provided to us based on the gifts of stories provided by survivors. It is now up to us to honour his legacy by taking actions that will lead to reconciliation.

Routine Proceedings

In addition to his role as the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he served in many prominent roles, including sitting on the Canadian Senate and as the co-commissioner of the aboriginal justice inquiry, a public inquiry commissioned by the Manitoba government to explore the failure of the justice system regarding the murder of Helen Betty Osborne and the death of J. J. Harper. In his role as co-commissioner, he revealed, unapologetically, the systemic racism within the Manitoba justice system and provided a path forward to improve its relationship with indigenous peoples, something that has never been actualized and something he never stopped fighting for.

In 2021, after the killing of Eishia Hudson, a 17-year-old indigenous girl, at the hands of the Winnipeg city police, he called out the independent investigation unit on its lack of transparency regarding police misconduct, stating:

I don't have a lot of faith in the Independent Investigation Unit that's in place right now to look into police officer conduct.

I can't think of an instance where they've truly done a transparent thorough investigation that has convinced me...that their decision is the right one in the circumstances.

He was a model of courage and truth-telling and he was a role model to me, reminding me to always be truthful even in the face of adversity, to lead with humility and kindness and to not attach myself to power and privilege, instead to support a collective effort to fight for a better world for all people.

● (1025)

He was a human rights defender whom I personally had the honour to know, both him and his family. He was always a truly humble and kind man who always took time to make sure anyone he spoke to felt special, including me. Sometimes when I was around him and he would ask me how I was doing and I would fill him in, I really felt he was proud of me. That meant a lot to me. That is a rare gift, and one that he had.

He had a way of making everyone he met feel special and loved. He was a tremendous listener and protector. It felt a little safer in the world knowing that this wonderfully kind and brilliant human had my back.

We have lost our Martin Luther King. He changed the world one truth at a time and brought everyone along with him. I know that many of us in our community are hurting with tremendous grief, and we must take the lessons that he taught us and honour him through action.

I am thankful to his family for sharing him with us. As a public servant, I know that service comes at great cost to families and children. I want them to know that I am here for them during this time of need.

I love my brother Niigaan. I will be here for him like he has always been here for me, because like his father, Niigaan is truly a gift to the world.

On behalf of the NDP, I send my deepest condolences to the family of the hon. Murray Sinclair. May he fly high with our ancestors until we meet again.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their touching testimonials to such a great and important Canadian.

[Translation]

I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 24 minutes.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “A New Era of Partnerships: Canada’s Engagement with Africa”. I would like to thank all members of the committee for their hard work and contributions to the report.

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

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting two reports today. First, I have the honour of presenting, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled “Certificate of Nomination of Caroline Maynard to the Position of Information Commissioner”.

[Translation]

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled “Certificate of Nomination of Nancy Bélanger to the Position of Commissioner of Lobbying”.

[English]

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank both Madame Bélanger and Madame Maynard for the incredible work they have been doing over the past seven years, sometimes frustrating, but I have the utmost confidence, as does the committee, that they will continue to do great work on behalf of Parliament and on behalf of Canadians.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to the motion adopted on Tuesday, November 5 regarding a question of privilege concerning the refusal to respond to questions by Ms. Lauren Chen.

● (1030)

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, presented on Friday, November 1, be concurred in.

Routine Proceedings

The reason why I am proposing this motion today is in response to an interim report on a committee study that the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology is undertaking right now. The motion that precipitated this within the committee read, "Following testimony from banking executives" the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology encourages "the Competition Bureau...to investigate potential anti-competitive behaviour in Canada's e-Transfer ecosystem, and if deemed necessary, the broader electronic payments industry in general."

For members of the House, this report is encouraging the Competition Bureau to look into what we believe, and this was a unanimous report at committee, to be a flagrant abuse of Canada's anti-competition laws and, frankly, a flagrant abuse of any sort of spirit of wanting to see productivity in the Canadian economy, because this issue impacts the payments industry in such a broad way. This may be a technical topic for some, but I will try to summarize it briefly.

Over 88% of Canadians use something called e-transfers. I guarantee that everybody in here has done this at some point in time. When we want to send money to, let us say, a pet sitter or if we are paying rent to our landlord, we would execute an e-transfer and that is where our money would go.

The key player in this space, the key facilitator of e-transfers in Canada, a dominant player as we heard from banking executives at the committee, is Interac. Interac is an association that is, for all intents and purposes, owned by the big banks in Canada.

This is how it works. Interac charges a fee to financial institutions, banks, for facilitating these e-transfers. What colleagues and I heard anecdotally was that there was a significant difference in the fees that were charged to big banks by Interac as opposed to smaller financial institutions. Smaller institutions were paying around the neighbourhood of 46¢ per transaction while big banks were paying 6¢.

What does that mean? It means that the big banks have a competitive advantage over smaller financial institutions. First, it is more difficult for smaller financial institutions to be competitive in this space. Second, it also allows bigger banks to make more profit off Canadian consumers.

Some Canadian consumers will say that they do not pay anything for e-transfers, but the reality is that anybody who is interacting with a bank in Canada is likely paying a significant annual fee or a hidden fee to have the privilege of banking in Canada, and there are situations where customers might go over even what is included in those plans. For e-transfers, the fees can range from \$1 to \$1.50, and there are billions of e-transfers a year. If we start doing the math on how much big banks are making compared to smaller banks on the price differential in that volume-based pricing system, if we then start thinking about how much more those big banks are making off their customer fees than smaller institutions are and if we start thinking about how much fees customers are paying just in general, does it not look a little sketchy?

That is what we were concerned about in the committee. Our concerns were validated, and for me as a parliamentarian, by shocking testimony from a banking executive, who also sits on Interac's

board. This person was clearly not prepared for these questions, but he did admit to the fact that this volume-based pricing system, which we had heard about anecdotally, did exist. That is highly problematic. The committee did pass a motion, an interim report, to encourage the Competition Bureau, which is an independent body, to look into this based on the testimony we heard.

• (1035)

I will be splitting, Mr. Speaker, my my time with a member for Simcoe North.

Why is this important? This is not just important from the perspective of smaller financial institutions being unable to be competitive with larger banks, which I believe is the case. It is also a matter of new and potentially emerging technologies that could lower fees for customers and for financial institutions entering the market. That is because Interac is essentially owned by the big banks.

If we look at Interac's website, we will see that the big banks nominate people to sit on their boards. They have essentially a controlling interest in Interac. Of course, they are going to ensure that new players, where they can within the competition law or the government refusing to act, they are going to try to squeeze profit out of this arrangement. They essentially have created a stranglehold on the e-transfer market.

I want to note something for colleagues, because this is kind of a niche topic. When we think about the ripple effect it has across the economy, it is pretty big. It is not just e-transfers; it is also the payments industry writ large. We know that, for example, the government did not regulate this, although it could have regulated it like other jurisdictions by putting a cap on what we call interchange fees for credit cards. Instead of doing that, it came up with a voluntary agreement with Visa and Mastercard. The fees are still much higher than other jurisdictions, like in the European Union. The government also did not ensure that those savings would be passed to small business. It actually did nothing. Now we have payment processors like Stripe, and Mark Carney, the Liberal's senior economic adviser, is on the board of directors, being accused of hoarding those savings. They basically admitted in testimony at our committee. There is a whole competitive issue in the payments industry.

However, I want to highlight for colleagues why we should be encouraging the Competition Bureau to look into this.

Routine Proceedings

Across the world, there are more modern payment systems. I am looking at Swish in Sweden,; FPS in the U.K.; UPI in India; and Pix in Brazil. These are all processors that facilitate e-transfers, but they do it in a way that is much more efficient and probably at a lower cost than Interac. For example, with Interac, it takes minutes to hours for that transaction to complete. All of us have been in a situation where we have asked someone if a transfer went through.

For the competitors with new and modern technology, the transfers almost happen instantly or within seconds. Customer fees are also way lower. They are almost negligible with some of the competitors. Interac has relatively low limits on what can go through in an e-transfer, whereas competitors can facilitate much larger transfers. These competitors, which we are not allowing into our market, might have more modern security, and we know that they have more modern security protocols.

There are competitors around the world that can make our economy more competitive by producing a competitive landscape in which e-transfer fees could be lower. They could be lower for our financial institutions. We could perhaps have more competition in our financial institutions. However, because of the way Interac is structured and governed and because of this volume-based pricing scale that it has for e-transfers, it creates a non-competitive environment for innovation for our competitors to enter, and that is wrong.

This is why this motion is here today. I hope the House, across all political stripes, will encourage and ensure that the Competition Bureau looks into this, given the massive economic impact. There is probably a lot more information that the industry committee needs to look into. This is a huge issue. The federal government committed to lowering bank fees for Canadians. It has not done that. When we are talking about productivity, this is a huge problem for the Canadian economy. It is also a problem for the fintech sector with regard to entering into rent-seeking, inflexible places that have pushed out innovation for many years. I also think the industry committee should be looking more into this, but I encourage colleagues to support this motion.

• (1040)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what we should be talking about in the House of Commons, which is ways to help save our constituents money. This is a great idea.

I am really proud of the fact that recently our government cut Visa and Mastercard transaction fees by 26% for small businesses. That is money small businesses can reinvest back into their communities or businesses. They can sponsor a soccer team. They can even hire a staff member, in many cases.

When I send an e-transfer, I know there is no cost to me, but there are hidden charges. Our government committed in budget 2024 to eliminate all junk fees at banks, and I wonder if that would apply. I would note that the member did not mention Venmo, and perhaps there is a reason for that. Venmo is very popular in the United States, but we cannot use it in Canada. I wonder if there was a reason for omitting it today.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, first, I need to clarify that in the deal the government came up with for Visa and Mastercard, there was no requirement for payment processors like Stripe to pass the savings along to small businesses. Advocacy groups have pointed out that these payment processors are actually hoarding these fees. Therefore, the government probably should have some sort of formal regulation to ensure that this situation is not happening.

Second, I need to point out and re-emphasize that Canadians do pay for e-transfer fees. They pay for it one way or the other, such as very high banking fees.

Third, even though the government has had nine years, it has not moved on these junk fees or done anything materially to allow for more competition in the banking industry. We are behind other jurisdictions in allowing for innovation in financial services writ large.

However, my colleague mentioned a company, and this is why the wording of the motion was broad. We are encouraging the competition commissioner to look at the payment system writ large. The spirit of the motion today is to say that there needs to be cross-partisan agreement that our banking system is outdated, that it is controlled by a few big players and that Canadians, be it individual consumers, companies or whatnot, are suffering because of it.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite all the partisanship in the House, I enjoy being able to find common ground, which is why I particularly enjoyed the comments of my comrade, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, who talked about rent-seeking. The member would know that rent-seeking is the practice of manipulating public policy or economic conditions to produce profit, and we know that comes at the cost of consumers.

I would invite my comrade from Calgary Nose Hill, with great socialist rhetoric, to please further expand on why rent-seeking in a crony capitalist economy only impacts and further harms consumers.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, much to the chagrin of my colleague, I have to point out that the way government pays for social programs is through taxes, and taxes are only created by the private sector and by Canadians who work and create revenue for the government. Money does not grow on trees. The socialist rhetoric that ignores that fact is magical fantasyland.

Routine Proceedings

The government has put regulations in place that are perhaps out of date or just do not reflect modern reality. When those regulations, or lack thereof, stifle competition in a free market system, we end up with oligopolies or monopolies. That ends up subjugating people, or preventing innovation or making people pay more. That is why we need to ensure we have competition in these sectors, and there are a lot of sectors in Canada that do not have competition right now, be it the telecom sector or banks. I could go on.

There needs to be cross-political alignment on the fact that if we are to talk about increasing productivity and economic growth so that the government can have sustainable social programs, we need more competition. This motion today deals with one sector of it, but I hope that there is cross-partisan agreement in this place that if a monopoly is used to profiting off of rent-seeking policies that make life unaffordable for Canadians and prevent innovation, its time is up.

• (1045)

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today again to speak on behalf of the residents of Simcoe North and to represent their views, as well as to discuss a very important issue with respect to what we believe is potentially anti-competitive behaviour in Canada's e-transfer ecosystem.

These revelations became known to us at the industry committee a couple of weeks ago. It is clear that Interac uses what it calls and has confirmed is volume-based pricing. We just heard my very capable colleague from Calgary Nose Hill outline how the system works, but here are the facts as I understand them.

The largest financial institutions in the country pay Interac six cents to send an e-transfer. The smallest financial institutions pay it 43 cents. That is a difference of seven times. In theory, volume-based discounts are not a bad thing. A lot of people, Canadians, shop at Costco. Because they get a volume discount, people walk out of there with five boxes of Cheerios when they really only need one.

There is nothing inherently wrong with volume discounts, but then one learns that Interac is owned by the banks. The financial institutions set the prices that Interac charges other financial institutions and, surprise, they favour themselves. There are governance issues at Interac. By the way, the ownership structure is completely secret, hidden from all in plain sight. We have no idea who owns what or what the compensation structure is for Interac executives or board members.

It gets worse. At the time that Interac developed its fee schedule, two financial institutions were co-chairs of the board. These two financial institutions were the largest in Canada at the time and the only two to meet the required volume threshold to get the lowest price. Is that a conflict of interest? It likely is.

Members of the government have a challenge understanding what a conflict of interest is, so I will explain it briefly. A conflict of interest can exist whether there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest. It does not have to be a bona fide conflict of interest. It can exist when a reasonable person perceives there to be a conflict. It would appear to me very clearly that a reasonable person walking down the street would say that it does not sound right that the big

banks get to set the pricing that smaller banks pay to compete with the big banks to send an e-transfer.

It is true that many Canadians do not pay for e-transfers, but Canadians can pay up to \$1.50 per transaction. If they bank at a big bank, it pays Interac only six cents. That is a heck of a gross profit margin. How much fraud is in the system when people pay six cents as the variable cost to send an e-transfer and make \$1.50 in revenue? By the way, the receiving bank sometimes charges the person receiving the transfer for that transaction in their bank account; that can be up to \$1.50. When the small institutions are trying to compete with the big ones, they offer free e-transfers, but they have to pay 43¢. Therefore, they have to make up that 43¢ of revenue somewhere else to offer the free banking service to their clients. In fact, I have a low- or no-cost banking account at one of these upstarts solely because it offers free cheques and free e-transfers. A lot of Canadians do not have the time, effort or means to shop around.

The solution here is a lot more transparency, of course. However, perhaps we could even consider other possibilities. Let us be very clear: I am not talking about Interac itself, but its owners, the dark Sith overlord owners called the banks. They are the ones pulling the strings, such as those of the puppets at Interac. It is not Interac itself that is the problem but the undue influence of the owners. Maybe we should think about freeing Interac from the shackles of the big banks. It would then have to deal with the big banks on an arm's-length basis.

• (1050)

We could also think about supporting a competitor to Interac, which would give people choice. That is a very radical position, but I think it would bring integrity back to the system. I am not saying we should absolutely do it, but the time has come to really consider all the options. We should be unburdened by the past.

We have to turn the page. We cannot go back to where these large oligopoly companies have undue influence and control. I swear, the banks must think some of us just fell out of a coconut tree with the practices they use. The answer to this problem is more competition. It is to give more choice to consumers, as well as choice to financial institutions on how to move money throughout the system.

Canadians, businesses and individuals spend about \$3 billion to \$5 billion a year in transaction fees to move money across the country. This is a significant profit pool for financial institutions, people and companies in the payment space. Competition will reduce the size of that profit pool so that consumers can benefit; this will leave more money in their pockets.

Routine Proceedings

I recognize that many people in this place have differing views on how we might achieve lower prices for Canadians. My own personal opinion is that lower prices will not be achieved by increasing the size of revenues for government. There is no correlation between increasing taxes on companies and lowering prices for Canadians. The idea is that we must attack these profit pools with competition. In fact, a Deloitte study suggested that up to 0.5% to 0.8% of GDP could be unlocked, of value for Canadians, if we moved forward with payments modernization.

The Bank of Canada has a role to play too. They set up standards that prominent payment systems must comply with. Interac is in non-compliance with two of those standards; specifically, they use volume-based pricing, not risk-based pricing, and they do not make public how one becomes a member of Interac.

Now, the Department of Justice in the United States has gone after its prominent payment system, Visa, for its practices at Interac, which it uses in the United States. That entity controls 60% of the debit market in the U.S. Interac controls about 95% of the debit market and 100% of the e-transfer market in Canada. I would encourage regulators to look at that example. It is clear that the status quo will not work anymore.

A wise man once said, “Do not moon the gorilla.” The gorilla is mooning us and laughing all the way to the bank because it is fleecing Canadians. A great new book came out called *Fleeced* by Andrew Spence. I would encourage everybody in this chamber to read it.

I have an amendment to move to the motion, so I would like to move that now.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, presented on Friday, November 1, 2024, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Committee for further consideration, provided that, for the purposes of this study,

(a) the following be ordered to appear as witnesses, for at least two hours each, at dates and times to be fixed by the Chair of the Committee, but no later than Tuesday, December 17, 2024:

- (i) the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance,
 - (ii) the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry,
 - (iii) Shereen Benzvy Miller, Commissioner of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada,
 - (iv) Matthew Boswell, the Commissioner of Competition,
 - (v) Jeremy Wilmot, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Interac Corp.,
 - (vi) a panel consisting of Patrick Collision, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Stripe, and John Collision, Co-founder and President of Stripe; and
- (b) it be an instruction that the Committee hold at least two other meetings to receive evidence from stakeholders and experts.”

With that, I conclude my remarks.

● (1055)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when one talks about the abuse of what takes place inside the chamber, we need to recognize that, again, we are seeing a concurrence report being introduced in favour of not speaking about a matter of privilege. That really tells Canadians the degree to which the Conservative Party is doing nothing more than playing a multi-million dollar game. That is what this is all about. It is an abuse coming from the leader of the Conservative Party, and no one does it better. After all, he was trained under Stephen Harper, who was the only prime minister held in contempt of Parliament in the Commonwealth; the current leader of the party was, in fact, the parliamentary secretary then.

This question is not to take away from the issue at hand but more to talk about why his leader continues to abuse the authorities and the rules of this chamber. Can the member explain why the Conservatives continue to play this game of filibuster, at great expense?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I do not really know what to do with that, other than to remind the hon. member that the current government is the one in contempt for not providing the documents that it has been duly required and asked to produce by the House.

The other day, I proposed another way. The Liberals could just get the \$400 million back for Canadians, and we might be able to get back to the people's work; we need either the documents or the money back. Maybe the parliamentary secretary is just upset because he checked the price of Bitcoin this morning.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I actually appreciate this debate, and I thank the member for the work on this and the motion. New Democrats have been talking about financial issues for a number of years with regard to fairness, and this issue is very important to talk about in this chamber. I thank the member for adding the amendment; at industry committee, we have been studying credit cards and the costs to Canadians.

Regarding this specific issue, in 1984, the banks got together to create the Interac system itself. It was a ruse that really made it seem that this was independent with regard to the financial institutions. Meanwhile, the banks actually gave birth to the system that, right now, is costing so much, has no competition and is really a drag on the economy.

● (1100)

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I always like to find opportunities to identify common ground with my colleagues. What my colleague has just espoused would be one of those circumstances.

The free market generally works well, but it sometimes fails. This is an exact example in which we have the operators coming together to stand up an organization that, over the last 40 years now, has used its pricing power to prevent competition, which would give lower prices for Canadians.

The member mentioned credit card interest rates. I would also mention this, just for the benefit of the House: The interest rates for credit cards in the 1980s were about 20%. Today, they are about 20%. Can we guess what the interest rates were in the 1980s? They were much higher than they are today.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be a bit biased here. There is a strong entrepreneurial spirit in the riding of Shefford. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB, often reminds me that a great many small and medium-size businesses and merchants in the riding of Shefford are members of the CFIB.

I gave an interview on the subject last weekend. A certain journalist found the press release I published last week interesting. It mentioned that the countries with the lowest interchange fees are those with far more stringent regulations, namely the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the European Union.

My colleague spoke briefly in his speech about what is going on globally. Where exactly does Canada rank internationally in terms of interchange fees? How can we do better?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to consider what is happening in other jurisdictions.

Other jurisdictions that have moved much faster on payments modernization, in particular the U.K. and the U.S., have seen transaction fees reduced for users. I do recognize that we have to think about the different types of players throughout the entire ecosystem: small businesses, medium-sized businesses, and large businesses. Large businesses get to use their own power to negotiate for interchange fees. We should make sure that it is a level playing field for all players.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to talk about what is going on in the House. I would like to provide some context as to why I think we are debating this particular motion today.

I will share my time with the member for Milton, who will provide his insight, perhaps a better insight, into the actual substance of the report.

I will start by saying that I appreciated the last comment from the member for Simcoe North about Bitcoin. I really hope he does not need to go anywhere and can stay in the House to get up when I finish my speech to ask me a question about Bitcoin. I would love to know more about his feelings on Bitcoin. The price has gone up, according to him. I did not realize that this morning, but the price of Bitcoin, according to the member for Simcoe North, has gone up, so I would love to hear more about that. I would also love to hear more about the policies the Conservatives have to offer Canadians on Bitcoin and investing in Bitcoin.

Perhaps this means we will soon see the Leader of the Opposition buy another shawarma with Bitcoin. That would be a great video, and what better time than when the price of Bitcoin is going up? I would encourage the member for Simcoe North to stay in his seat, bear with having to listen to me for nine more minutes and then get up so we can talk about Bitcoin. He can ask me a question about Bitcoin and provide me with some of the great insight I need to know about that. I would love to engage in that discussion.

We have to take the opportunity to understand why we are here right now talking about this particular issue. I am not saying it is

not an important issue. I think that is an extremely important thing to ask the anti-competitive agencies to engage in looking at certain practices.

However, let us back up to about four weeks ago, when Conservatives started debating a privilege motion. I know the member who moved that motion likes to talk about procedure and how things happen. He makes sure those who are watching are properly informed, so I will do the same. The Conservatives moved a motion based on a ruling from the Speaker, and as a result, we have seen the Conservatives filibustering for the last four and a half weeks. They are filibustering their own motion, I should add. The motion is to send this particular question of privilege to PROC, yet they do not even want to vote on that.

Conservatives moved a motion to send this somewhere, but they absolutely refuse to do that. What have they done in the process? They filibustered by putting up almost all, and I believe at last count it was about 106 Conservatives, to speak for 20 minutes. They then moved an amendment, which allowed some of them to speak twice or even three times. When that started to run out, they then started to move concurrence motions like the one we are debating today. After that, they allowed the debate on the subamendment to the privilege motion to collapse so they could reset their speaking roster and start from scratch to give everybody another 20-minute round.

That is the game being played in the House of Commons right now. That is the game, which was referred to earlier as a multi-million dollar game, the Conservatives are playing. To the people watching, it is their tax dollars that are going toward that. It is their tax dollars being spent, in the millions of dollars right now, to keep the House operating in order to appease the Conservatives' desire for a filibuster. This is a filibuster on an issue that, by the way, the Speaker has ruled on. The Conservatives are the only ones who are speaking to it. At times, they are the only ones who are asking each other questions on the issue.

Conservatives are doing it for only one reason. They are doing it to support the concept and promote the idea that the House is dysfunctional and nothing can get done. This is because they benefit off of and see opportunity come from making things seem totally chaotic. Where have we witnessed that lately? It seems to happen a lot south of the border, so Conservatives have jumped on board and have said that this is how they are going to deal with things too. They are going to make things seem completely out of order. It is the only way to advance any of their personal political objectives, and this is where we have ended up.

• (1105)

The reason it is important for folks at home to know this is that we have an Order Paper and a projected order of business each day for the House of Commons. This is public. We can find it on the website and there is a printed copy provided every day.

Routine Proceedings

Just so folks at home know what we would have been debating and discussing, had the Conservatives not chosen to continue this filibuster and bring forward concurrence motions like the one we have today, I will list some of the things that are on the Order Paper. The next item to be debated is from the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and it is Bill C-71, an act to amend the Citizenship Act 2024, which would make amendments to our Citizenship Act. After that, there is a ways and means motion to bring in adjustments to the capital gains tax, which we had been talking about for a number of months. That is what we were going to debate after Bill C-71. Following that, there is the Minister of National Defence making changes to the military justice system. That is also listed on the Order Paper as one of the items the House would be debating. The Order Paper also lists an act to enact the Online Harms Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act and an act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

These are the issues that the Canadian public should know we are trying to debate in the House of Commons while the Conservatives are talking to each other all the time. As the Conservatives are setting up these concurrence motions and their motions of privilege, they are filibustering. We cannot talk in the House of Commons right now about protecting children from online harm because the Conservatives have chosen to bring this place to an absolute halt and not let anything proceed for five weeks now. I will put 90% of the blame on Conservatives, and then I will assign 5% of the blame to both the Bloc and the NDP because the Bloc and the NDP know that there is a way through this.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc wants to take 10%. They can have the full 10% of the blame then.

The Bloc members need to understand, and I know that they do, that if they chose to end this filibustering, they have the power to do it. In a minority parliament like this, we obviously cannot do it alone, but the Bloc, or the NDP for that matter, could choose to say, "Enough is enough. We've now let this go on for five weeks. We've given them the opportunity to do it. We've allowed them to run their course and they have responded in the way that they have, but now it's time to get down to business, like adults." The problem is that neither the Bloc nor the NDP has chosen to go that route. However, I want them both to know that the door is still open. That door will not close.

If there is an interest, I would encourage their leaders in the House to contact our House leader so that we can have that discussion about moving things forward for Canadians. Things did operate much better, and I must say this to my NDP colleagues, who I really have not picked on in this debate, but they did operate much better prior to the NDP leader choosing to not work with the government anymore. We accomplished a lot of great things, such as pharmacare and dental care. I send my kudos to the NDP.

I have said a number of times already in the House, as well as in my community, that we had a really good working relationship with the NDP, which gave us the ability to get things done on behalf of

Canadians. The NDP knows that. I understand that, for political reasons, it may have had to make the decision to leave the supply and confidence agreement. I understand that, and I am not naive to that. However, NDP members still have the opportunity to look at what is going on in chamber and realize the amount of tax dollars that are being spent for this charade to continue.

At some point, I genuinely hope that the NDP will come to its senses and say that five or six weeks is enough. Now it is time to move on so that we can talk about things such as the online harms bill, so that we can get down to doing business for Canadians, such as protecting children when they are online.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague for his speech, because I now realize how much we have hurt the government. The government, the poor victim, is being overwhelmed by the Conservatives' filibustering, with the support of the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, and we have paralyzed the House. The government is being beaten down day after day. I realize that now and I feel bad.

I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleague. I can also offer him moral support. Perhaps he can come see me. Maybe we can hug after question period. He has my full support.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the melodrama is a little over the top. The member does not have to apologize to me. He does not have to speak to me or reach out to me. We do not have to sit down and talk about it. All he needs to do is vote in favour of putting an end to this. All I need is for the Bloc to start acting like adults and to let us get down to the business that the House and the people elected to be here should be doing.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with my Bloc colleague to offer my sincerest apologies. Actually, I was looking for my tiny violin, but I am not allowed props, so I thought maybe I could not use it, unfortunately.

What I am interested in, however, is the recognition, absolutely, that the NDP ripped up the agreement. From our end, it was because we simply could not continue to support the government in the fact that it was ignoring a war in Gaza and ignoring the massive amount of corporate greed in Canada and doing nothing about it. While we could work together to some degree to get some of the things we wanted, certainly, they were not all of the things New Democrats want.

Maybe the member could talk a bit about where the government has failed and take responsibility for some of the actions we see here today.

Routine Proceedings

• (1115)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, again, I do not need the sympathy. It is not necessary. I will say that I do not think it was entirely about what the member just said, because those issues have been going on for the better part of a year. Greedflation has gone on even longer than that. We have been working with the members on that.

We also saw, from the NDP, a significant shift in its environmental policy. We saw the leader of the NDP say he does not believe in pricing pollution anymore. I can either accept the member's word for it, and I would like to do that, or I can look at how the NDP leader reacted to the pressure from the Conservative leader, how he was not able to stand up to the political pressure of the slogans from the leader of the Conservative Party.

I have to choose between believing what the member just said, referencing two issues as a reason they got out of it, or the massive hypocrisy displayed by the NDP when it comes to pricing pollution. I regret to say that, unfortunately, the latter is more convincing.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems the government does not want to be responsible for any of its actions whatsoever. Everything is other people's fault. Liberals take no responsibility whatsoever for what they do. They create the problem. They are sitting there, trying to defend themselves, and blaming all other parties. If they are transparent, and if they tell the truth and do the right thing, no one wants to stall Parliament. They are doing this because they believe in what they are doing, and they want to stall Parliament and the democratic process because they are not transparent.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am really disappointed, for starters, that the Conservative member for Simcoe North did not get up to ask me about Bitcoin. I thought he was going to, but I will certainly accept the question from another Conservative member. I would disagree when he says Liberals do not want to stand up for Canadians. We are literally here wanting to talk about an act to enact the online harms act, to amend the Criminal Code respecting mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide Internet service, and to make consequential other amendments.

The member wants me to believe that because Conservatives have chosen to filibuster something, and the other two opposition parties are unwilling to work with us, this is somehow indicative of the government not being responsible. On the contrary, we are being responsible. We want to talk about the legislation that is important to Canadians and the issues they care about, not what the Conservatives are doing right now.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House today to talk about all of the measures with respect to banking regulations and fees that various organizations and companies charge consumers, and how the government is taking actions to reduce those fees and help Canadians through this challenging affordability crisis that so many people are experiencing.

I would like to congratulate the small businesses in Milton that I visited over the last couple of weeks to talk about the reductions in their credit card fees.

Indeed, budget 2024 reduced credit card transaction fees for small businesses, which took effect on October 19. This has an impact on 90% of small businesses that accept credit cards, and we are lowering their fees by 27%. That is going to save the average small business, like BarBurrito in Milton, up to \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year. That is money that business owners can reinvest in their business, use to sponsor a local soccer team or use to hire a new employee or two. This is making a huge impact on small businesses and it is only because of the leadership of the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, who stood up to some of the largest companies in the world, Visa and Mastercard, and said they were charging too much for those transactions.

Everybody uses credit cards to pay for meals and goods every single day. On a small transaction, like \$20 for lunch, it really does add up over the course of a year. Congratulations to all the small business owners across the country who will be seeing a 27% reduction in that very onerous cost from large credit card companies.

This builds on the action we took with the tax cut for small businesses that we brought forward in budget 2022, which is also saving businesses across Canada \$660 million. It is phenomenal.

Small businesses in Canada are the heart and the backbone of our economy. They employ local people and purchase local goods. I always encourage people to shop local. In fact, this year I was wondering if I could manage to buy all of my Christmas presents on Main Street in Milton. We have some amazing shops, opportunities to buy gift cards, a lot of great perishable items, but also great things for the shelf, just really nice items, and not just seasonal items either. I am thinking of The Barn Door Studio in Milton, which is a gift shop but also a coffee shop and craft studio. We also have a brand-new chocolate store in Milton that I am really excited to shop at over the holidays. Chudleigh's Blossom Cafe is a great place to go for a hot chocolate or hot cider or coffee over the winter.

Milton is just chockablock with great local small businesses, and all of them are saving money with the government's new transaction fee reduction of 27%. It is good news for small businesses and it is great news for our economy. It is also good news for consumers, as when we lower those costs for small businesses, they can choose to pass on those savings to their customers. We are very hopeful.

Our economy is rebounding from the COVID downturn in remarkable fashion; it is doing quite well. We added over 50,000 jobs in the last couple of months, and 183,000 jobs just in Ontario over the last four months. We know global inflation is a challenge for families in Canada, but we are meeting the moment and we are fighting every single day on affordability with real solutions that are having a very significant impact for families.

Routine Proceedings

I was here in adjournment debate last night talking about the impact that one of those, the Canada carbon rebate, is having for lower-income families. As we continue to fight the climate crisis and do our part in a global carbon market to reduce our footprint, we have to acknowledge that as an oil-producing nation, Canada is very wealthy and we have one of the largest, if not the largest, carbon footprints per capita in the world.

The Conservatives like to talk about accountability and responsibility. I want to be accountable to future generations in terms of the impact I have on the environment. As Canadians, we deal with a lot of extreme weather, even outside of the extreme weather that has been in the news lately. The summers can be very hot and the winters can be very cold in any given year. I heard on the radio this morning that there is absolutely no shadow of a doubt that 2024 will be the hottest year on record for Planet Earth. It will be the first year ever that we will have experienced more than 1.5°C of warming.

If I sound a bit emotional, it is because I love Planet Earth and because we are up against people who seem to ignore that we as Canadians have an obligation to protect it and to reduce, wherever possible, our impact on Planet Earth.

● (1120)

We know burning fossil fuels is the main human cause for climate change. There is no denying that; the science is very clear. Canada is proudly an oil-producing nation, and oil exports are at an all-time high from Canada. Oil and gas profits are at an all-time high in Canada. I congratulate those companies. Just 10 years ago, their profits were around \$6.5 billion to \$6.6 billion. Now they are in excess of \$60 billion. That is great for Canada's economy, but those dollars need to be reinvested into innovation because, unfortunately, the intensity of a barrel of oil coming from the oil sands in Alberta has only gotten worse since the 1990s.

Every single sector in Canada is reducing its carbon footprint and reducing the impact it is having on the environment. All sectors are finding ways to use less fossil fuel and to burn less fuel in their production and operations. The fossil fuel industry, in particular the oil sands in Alberta and Saskatchewan, is having a negative impact—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, while I am enjoying the member's dissertation and his thin knowledge of the oil industry, this motion is about Interac fees. Perhaps the member could be relevant to the issue we are debating.

The Deputy Speaker: I always suggest staying relevant to what we are discussing, and maybe referring back to it every once in a while just so we are on the same page.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, that is ironic coming from a member who has been up at least twice for 20 minutes to talk about recent events and has gone on, ad nauseam, tangentially about various things.

However, one of the things people buy with their Interac card is gas at the gas station. When I use my credit card to fuel my vehicle with electrons from a local charging station, there are credit card transaction fees associated with that, and if I use my Interac card, there are fees associated with that too. Also, local businesses in-

clude gas stations, and those gas stations have those fees. When somebody goes in to buy their lunch, fuel or a coffee at, say, an Esso with a Tim Hortons, those fees apply. Therefore, it is very applicable.

I also find it ironic that the member would stand up as I was talking about the oil patch, being from an oil-producing region in Atlantic Canada. He voted against the Atlantic accord, which would spread wealth into Atlantic Canada and provide Atlantic Canadians with the ability to produce clean, green electricity with offshore wind and continue to be innovators for the country we all love. That member voted against his constituents. He voted against innovation, green energy and new jobs for Atlantic Canadians. It is absolutely astonishing that the member opposite from—

● (1125)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for South Shore—St. Margarets just brought up relevance to this debate, and now the member across the way is talking about the member for South Shore—St. Margarets. The focus should be on banking fees or Interac fees and I wish the member across the way would get back to the topic at hand.

The Deputy Speaker: I always enjoy the reminders for all of us, and again, I would remind the hon. member to tie it back at some point.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has the floor.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Conservative members are paying attention to my speech.

I was talking about the credit card transaction fees, the banking fees and the Interac charges that we all endure every single day. One of the things that budget 2024 aimed to do was cut down on those junk fees, like insufficient funds charges that are sometimes \$35 or \$50, which is just too much.

Recently announced measures to ensure that Canadians are treated fairly by their banks are all part of budget 2024. These measures include protecting Canadians from rising mortgage payments, and recent changes to our mortgage rules have allowed Canadians to extend the amortization on their mortgage as well as ensure that they get the most competitive interest rates. We have also enhanced banking options, lowering non-sufficient fund fees, and we have also ensured that Canadians have an impartial advocate when they have complaints about their bank. For a lot of Canadians, when they call the bank to challenge a fee or some cost that they have absorbed, it is hard to have that conversation with somebody who actually works at the bank.

These newest measures to keep banking more affordable will continue to make sure that the government's action to bring down inflation and stabilize prices for Canadians has that impact.

We are also protecting Canadians from rising mortgage payments. The Deputy Prime Minister recently met with CEOs from all of Canada's largest banks and outlined her expectations that they abide by the government's new mortgage guidelines and by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada's regulations. That is having a positive impact for Canadians.

The Deputy Prime Minister has also directed banks to proactively work with mortgage holders at risk of default on their principal residences to provide tailored mortgage relief. The Deputy Prime Minister emphasized to the bank CEOs that she will be closely monitoring that compliance, and she has been. We have also made banking more affordable for Canadians. The Deputy Prime Minister announced that the government is taking action to secure enhanced low-cost and no-cost options at Canadian banks.

Next, we are also making progress in cracking down on those junk fees. We have started with the NSF charges that are applied by banks. Sometimes they are in excess of \$35 and even \$50, which is really challenging. If somebody is experiencing that time when they are getting an NSF charge, it means they need a little help, not another charge. We know that those are disproportionately impacting the financial well-being of Canadians who may be living paycheque to paycheque, so we are cracking down on that.

Fourth, we are also supporting Canadians who believe they have been treated unfairly by their bank. When it comes to eliminating the transaction fees, reducing them by 27% and making sure that Canadians have options at their banks, the Liberal Party has their back.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member spoke quite a bit about the environment, and I think it is important to note that under this government's plan, Canada is not on track to meet its climate targets. In fact, at COP27 Canada ranked 58th out of 63 countries, and I believe we even fell further than that last year. Their carbon tax plan has driven up the cost of living for Canadians to the point that people are going to food banks, struggling to put food on their tables and struggling to fill their gas tanks or afford home heating as the cold winter months approach. The Liberals' plan has led to no environmental gain, but all economic pain for Canadians who are struggling right now.

Would the member not agree that their plan has failed and that it is time to change course?

• (1130)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, emissions have not been so low since before that member was born. He is the youngest member of Parliament, I believe, and I am very proud of the fact that the emissions that Canada and our economy are currently emitting into our natural environment are the lowest they have been in his lifetime. That is extremely significant. Kurt Cobain was alive last time the emissions were this low.

It is because our government is taking action on lowering emissions, and instead of acknowledging that, the Conservative members want to suggest that we are failing. That is absolutely not true, and the food banks report, as my colleague referenced, came out recently. There were 108 pages, and not once did it mention the carbon tax or the carbon price, and that is because food banks know,

just like we do, that climate change is impacting food prices, and the Canada carbon rebate supports families who need it most.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although my colleague's speech was definitely interesting, it had nothing to do with what we are debating. I will therefore ask him a question about the positions taken by his colleagues who actually talked about the subject we are debating.

I am concerned to hear members of the government say that it is ridiculous, that there is filibustering in the House and that it prevents them from addressing important matters. I agree on the filibustering, but there is something I do not agree with. The subject of this debate on the adoption of a committee report is especially important. Credit card fees are a very important subject, and I am very happy that someone took the initiative to set aside the usual filibustering to talk about them.

I would like to know why the members across the aisle are angry that we decided to talk about credit card fees, which are extremely high for small merchants and are detrimental to our economy.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his interest in this matter. It is true that a question on procedure in the House of Commons is important. It is also true that that was not the topic of my speech today.

I made the choice to talk about things that are important to the people of my riding, in other words, the cost of living, interest charges, credit card fees and other things that have an impact on the finances of my constituents in Milton.

I agree with my colleague that the Conservatives are filibustering the House. However, it is our choice to talk about the issues that matter to our constituents.

Privilege

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to my colleague and he said something that was factually wrong about decreasing emissions. Emissions are not decreasing in the oil patch. Under the Prime Minister, since he went to Paris, oil production in Canada has risen 41%. It will increase much higher thanks to TMX. Canada is now on track to be the world leader of increased oil production at a time when António Guterres is accusing the fossil fuel companies of being the godfathers of climate catastrophe. The government is subsidizing 52% of every barrel going down the TMX pipeline as a gift to the oil companies. We have had their executives at our committee; not only do they not believe in climate science, they do not care and they are not going to pay.

Why are we continuing to promote massive increases in bitumen production as the planet burns?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, I did not say the emissions from the oil patch have decreased. In fact, I said the very opposite, so I appreciate the attention of the member. The emissions in the oil patch have gone up, the emissions from the oil and gas sector have gone up as has the production. That is why I am proud of this country and this government for being the first oil-producing nation, and indeed the first nation in the G20, to put a cap on pollution in the oil and gas sector.

We are a world's first, we are leaders in the fight against climate change and we are continuing to be an oil- and gas-producing nation. Our economy depends on oil and gas. We will continue to be a responsible agent of change with respect to energy production in Canada.

* * *

● (1135)

PRIVILEGE

REFUSAL OF WITNESS TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS FROM STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with apologies to my colleagues, I am rising on a question of privilege that I raised with the table earlier this morning, in relation to the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which was tabled by our chair this morning during routine proceedings. I am rising at the earliest opportunity to make the case for this question of privilege.

This is concerning the refusal of a witness, Ms. Lauren Chen, who is one of the co-founders of Tenet Media. Ms. Chen appeared before our committee on Tuesday this week, and subsequently refused to answer any and all questions that were posed to her. In the committee's report, which was tabled this morning, it did cite the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, on pages 178 to 179. It states:

Witnesses must answer all questions which the committee puts to them. A witness may object to a question asked by an individual committee member. However, if the committee agrees that the question be put to the witness, the witness is obliged to reply. On the other hand, members have been urged to display the "appropriate courtesy and fairness" when questioning witnesses. The actions of a witness who refuses to answer questions may be reported to the House.

That is what is being done today. I should note that the motion authorizing the tabling of this report was unanimous. Ms. Chen was given every single opportunity, and she was reminded of her obligations before the committee. She was also warned on a number of occasions that the process could escalate and could eventually find itself on the floor of the House.

To put this briefly in context, the study that the public safety committee is currently engaged in is with regard to Russian disinformation campaigns. We, as a House, know of the foreign interference by a number of countries; Russia, India and China are probably the top three. This is a very serious topic. We know this from multiple witnesses who have appeared before our committee. These are current and former national security experts, and people who work in academia. We know that Russia's overarching strategic goal with respect to Canada is to sow discord and discontent.

There is a very serious United States indictment that lists Ms. Chen and her husband, Liam Donovan, as the co-founders of Tenet Media, and accuses that company of having received almost \$10 million directly from the Russian government through its subsidiary, Russia Today, with the express purpose of paying certain YouTube influencers and personalities to sow discord and discontent, and to spread disinformation and misinformation. The subject matter is very important.

I want to remind everyone, with respect to non-answers, it is important that we understand that under the Constitution Act, the House of Commons and its committees have an incredibly important role to play. I would put them on a level with our courts. Our standing committees are allocated certain subject studies, and they are allowed, by virtue of the Constitution, to conduct inquiries, to send for persons and papers, and to demand answers.

Given the serious nature of disinformation and of foreign interference, I believe that Ms. Chen's refusal to comply with the questions that were posed to her represents a very serious breach of the privileges of this House, and particularly of the standing committee on public safety. It is not something that we can conveniently ignore. Indeed, in many parliaments, precedent has been set where this matter has been referred to the House.

I understand, given that Ms. Chen and her husband are referred to in a United States indictment, that certainly they do have some legitimate fears about testifying on a sensitive subject. I would argue that they put themselves in this position, but it is important to recognize that when a witness appears before a duly constructed standing committee of the House, the parliamentary privilege that the members enjoy, both in this House and at committee, to be able to speak freely, also extends to witnesses.

● (1140)

I will quote from our procedure and practice material:

The privilege of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings is generally regarded as the most important of the privileges enjoyed by members of Parliament. This right is protected by the Constitution Act, 1867, and the Parliament of Canada Act.

Freedom of speech permits members to speak freely in the conduct of a proceeding of Parliament, such as in the Chamber during a sitting or in committees during meetings, while enjoying complete immunity from prosecution or civil liability for any comment they make. In order to encourage truthful and complete disclosure without fear of reprisal or other adverse actions as a result of their testimony, this right is also extended to individuals who appear before the House or its committees. The House of Commons could not work effectively unless its members, and witnesses appearing before House committees, were able to speak and criticize without being held to account by any outside body.

I believe Ms. Chen was extended every courtesy and was made to understand the consequences of her non-actions. Indeed, during Tuesday's committee proceedings, I noted the increasing frustration displayed by members from all parties sitting around the table. That is why, when it came to my second round of questions and I had the chance to move a motion to refer this back to the House, there was quick and unanimous agreement.

With those reasons in mind and indeed the precedent that has been set by other examples, I believe if you were to take this matter under advisement, you would find a *prima facie* case for a breach of privilege. I would then be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this question of privilege, the Conservative Party would like to review the points raised, come back to the House and express our opinions on it in due course.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals would like to do the same and report back.

The Deputy Speaker: I urge all members to get back to the House as soon as possible with their responses.

The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois would also like to have the opportunity to carefully review the member's concerns before speaking to the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member. As I said, the Chair hopes to be able to provide a response to the House as soon as possible. I ask that members provide a response as soon as possible so that the Chair can make a ruling quickly.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that the question of privilege just raised appears to be very worrisome. I am sure that once the Speaker has heard the views of each party, he will make a very enlightened decision.

Today we are debating the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. It deals with interchange fees, the fees that credit card companies charge businesses. This is a very important issue. As soon as I was elected to the House, businesses

Routine Proceedings

in my riding asked me about it. Convenience stores, gas stations and grocery stores say it makes no sense. Their business model relies on a high volume of sales with small profit margins. The share of their costs that goes to credit cards is high, because every time a transaction is paid for with a credit card—whether it is a full tank of gas, some groceries or a chocolate bar—the fee charged is very high. The fee is much higher than elsewhere in the world, in many countries. I will be citing at least one case soon.

This erodes the revenues of merchants. We know that grocers, convenience store owners and small businesses operate in a highly competitive environment, while credit card companies practically form a duopoly or oligopoly. Apart from Visa, Mastercard, and maybe American Express, there are practically no other cards in use. As a result, these credit card companies can band together and charge exorbitant rates.

The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology has started studying the issue. After hearing testimony from certain witnesses, and before even drafting a full report and getting to the bottom of the issue, it decided that the situation was serious enough to immediately send the House a report entitled “Potential anti-competitive behaviour in Canada's e-Transfer ecosystem”. The website of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology states the following:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your Committee has considered the matter of Credit Card Practices and Regulations in Canada.

The report simply contains the following sentence, which reads:

Following testimony from banking executives, your committee recommends that the Competition Bureau be encouraged to investigate potential anti-competitive behaviour in Canada's e-Transfer ecosystem, and if deemed necessary, the broader electronic payments industry in general.

The members of the committee realized how big of a problem this is and determined that the Competition Bureau needed to quickly address it while the committee continued its study. That is what we are debating today.

Obviously, we are strongly in favour of this. I would be surprised if there were any member of this House who is not favour of it because, as I said, as soon as I was elected, many businesses in my riding and across Quebec began asking me about this and continue to do so. I am sure that all members of the House are being asked about the credit card fees being imposed on consumers and the fees that businesses have to pay. This is still happening.

Routine Proceedings

A little after 2015, Liberal member Linda Lapointe introduced a private member's bill. She received a rather choice spot in the order of precedence when her name was picked out of the hat. Ms. Lapointe ran a grocery store in her riding. She thought that this was so important that she used her round to raise the issue. The Liberal government ended up pushing back her turn to speak until it opted to make her a parliamentary secretary, the immediate effect of which was to strip her of her private member's bill. This was the first action the Liberal government took on the question of fees charged to merchants. The party had among its ranks a member who had a grocery store and who chose to use her parliamentary privilege to appeal to the House for changes to be made. I repeat, I do not see who could be against this, since it affects all businesses in our ridings. In the end, the government found a strategy to ensure that the question never came up for debate.

At the same time, in the Bloc Québécois, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean introduced a bill on the same topic, with basically the same effects, but with the election and the minority government, it never came up for debate. It is time that that changed.

In 2022 there was a ray of hope when the Minister of Finance indicated in her budget that she was setting the situation right. We thought we had a nice victory to celebrate, and that at last the minister had gotten off her high horse and seen the light.

• (1145)

She said that the matter of interchange fees on Visa and MasterCard transactions would be settled, but as we get more experience we are beginning to understand the way things work. They say all the right things and they say they are going to solve the problem. The fine print at the bottom of the page, however, says that the government will start by asking the credit card companies to fix the problem on their own. If they do not, the government will settle the matter and create a law. Thus, the Minister of Finance and the government are fine with the temporary, rather symbolic measures that the credit card companies have taken, which change nothing for grocery stores. In fact, grocers have appealed to us. I will return to this.

There is a link between what the credit card companies are doing, the fees they charge merchants and the price for a basket of groceries. This is highly significant. We have been living with inflation for years now, and for years the government has said it would take action. Last year, shortly before Thanksgiving, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry said that he had spoken to grocery store representatives and that turkeys were on sale. The thing is, though, that every year on the eve of Thanksgiving, grocery stores offer a deal on turkeys, since Thanksgiving is right around the corner. The minister said it was thanks to his intervention, but we could see that his intervention did not fix the problem.

There is one specific thing the government can do to solve the problem: address interchange fees and the fees that credit card companies charge grocery stores. This how the government can intervene to bring grocery prices down. What is it actually doing? The Minister of Finance and the government are settling for the voluntary measures Visa and Mastercard chose for themselves. Grocery store owners reached out to us and told us that it is not working. They say credit card companies' voluntary measures are not doing

anything for them, so the government needs to step in. I forwarded that letter along with a summary of their demands to the minister more than two months ago. As we can see, nothing has changed.

What is the problem? In Australia, for example, the fees that merchants can be charged are set through regulations and laws. They are capped at 0.5%. Here, the average is 1.4%, three times higher. Why are our fees three times higher? Are credit card fees, transactions and administrative expenses higher in Canada and Quebec than in Australia? I do not think so. I think that Australians had the necessary political will to intervene and pass legislation. They saw an oligopoly, and they knew that the free market only works if there is competition. They saw that companies were using their oligopoly to get more value and decided that that was unacceptable, so they reduced the fees to 0.5%. Here, the fees are 1.4%, three times higher. Some credit card companies even charge merchants up to 4% in fees, while, in Australia, they pay eight times less, or 0.5%.

I studied economics. In economics 101, we are taught how companies react. Companies will do whatever it takes to maximize their profits. If they have an oligopoly, they will use their power to increase fees, get more value and earn more profits. I taught that every semester in the introduction to economics class I used to teach at CEGEP. The government knows this, so it is up to the government to intervene by making regulations or passing laws capping these fees.

The government says that it is doing everything it can to lower the cost of groceries. However, there is one change it could make that it has known about for years. A Liberal member even tabled a bill on the subject. If, for example, fees were set at 0.5% instead of 1.4%, that would be almost a full percentage point lower. Grocery prices would fall by almost one percentage point. The major credit card companies would make normal profits rather than excessive profits. However, the government refuses to make that happen. What did the government do? As I was saying, in the 2022 budget, the minister said that the government was going to do something, but that the companies would have to tell the government what they wanted to do first.

• (1150)

Here is what these credit card companies did. They crunched the numbers. Keep in mind that, just a few years earlier, we had been talking about the free market, duopolies and oligopolies. The retail sector has some really big players, starting with Walmart. Walmart decided to capitalize on its strong market position. The company was so dominant in its sector that it told the credit card companies that the days of 4% transaction fees on certain cards, or even 1%, 1.5% or 2%, were over. Walmart instructed them to do as it said, meaning that they would have to charge a reasonable rate or Walmart would refuse to accept their cards. Walmart's market position gave it the clout to make such a move. Walmart even refused to accept Visa for a few months, just to show that it was serious. Visa and Mastercard decided to lower the transaction fees they were charging Walmart. Walmart had pushed back hard, and it worked.

Routine Proceedings

Following the minister's request to help out SMEs, the credit card companies crunched the numbers and said they were going to offer the same rate they give Walmart, but only to small businesses with low sales volumes. They crunched the numbers and said they did not want to include grocery stores because that is where they make their money. I do not want to misspeak, but I believe that Mastercard said that if a company's annual sales were lower than \$175,000, it would charge it the same rates as Walmart. Visa set its limit at \$300,000.

If a company makes \$175,000 or \$300,000 in sales per year and takes in a 10% profit, that means it clears \$17,000 or \$30,000 in profit per year. That would not even pay the median wage. Obviously, this measure would only cover very small businesses. Grocery stores, like convenience stores and gas stations, have a low-margin business model. It is something like a 1% to 2% profit margin, but on a huge volume of sales. They are therefore excluded from the voluntary temporary measures Visa and Mastercard put in place at the minister's request. The minister and the government gleefully tooted their own horns, claiming they had won.

They won all right, but only at the rhetoric game. All morning, they have been saying that they are protecting SMEs. However, these are temporary measures. What is more, businesses that rely heavily on credit card payments are excluded.

As I was saying, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, who was the industry critic at the time, and I received a request late last summer that we immediately forwarded to the minister. It came from the Quebec Food Retailers Association. Founded in 1955, this association represents food retailers who support the development of the food industry. It reiterates exactly what I am saying, that in the 2021-22 federal budget, the government had promised to “[l]ower the average overall cost of interchange fees for merchants” and “[e]nsure that small businesses benefit from pricing that is similar to large businesses”, such as Walmart. This is what the association says:

Unfortunately, the agreement that followed between the government and credit card issuers states that a merchant must have an annual Visa sales volume of \$300,000 and an annual Mastercard sales volume of \$175,000 to benefit from reduced rates, but this excludes almost every food retailer.

The agreement is therefore useless. It does not reduce the price of groceries, which are a necessity. The association notes that its members have low profit margins, and it gives an example. I mentioned Australia, which has capped fees at 0.5%. Grocery stores there say they pay \$155,000 per year on average in interchange fees to credit card companies, while a similar grocery store in Europe only pays \$30,000, five times less. This \$120,000 per grocery store could help lower the price of groceries, but the credit card duopoly keeps it for itself. Why? It is because these two companies are taking advantage of their dominant position and the government is refusing to act on the root cause, which is obviously unacceptable, hence the committee's report and our interventions.

● (1155)

When my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean presented his bill, we immediately received calls from the credit card companies saying that we did not know what we were talking about and that we were threatening the economy, the environment and, at the very least, the solar system, if not our galaxy, the Milky Way. Obviously, it is in

these companies' interest to hire lobbyists to tell us not to do that. The thought that we could cut their profit margins, their revenues, by a third makes them nervous.

We know that they put a lot of pressure on the government, and we know that the government has given in to their demands. Rather than defending consumers and merchants, it decided to listen to the duopoly, which is highly organized and which told the government that it must not do that. I do not know whether the government believed that it would threaten the galactic balance of the Milky Way, but, in any case, it gave in. It asked the companies to submit a proposal, since it only wanted to save face. This way, everyone saves face, merchants pay, consumers pay, and groceries are more expensive. The government has leverage it could use to intervene, but it will not do it, and that is obviously unacceptable.

I have a few more points to raise. The number of credit card transactions is growing. As we know, the pandemic and the lockdown changed the way we consume. People are buying more online. Even groceries can be bought online now, and more and more people are doing it. The habit stuck, and now more and more purchases are being made online. According to the most recent figures, in 2022, there was a 17.5% increase in Canada, and an even larger increase in Quebec, 18.4%. Clearly, this is a problem that is getting worse. We are therefore joining the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology in asking the government to intervene. We are asking the government to intervene for the sake of grocery stores and retailers like convenience stores and gas stations, but it is not doing anything. My colleagues can rest assured that the Bloc will continue to press this issue.

I would like to point out an interesting detail to my colleagues. Quebec has its Consumer Protection Act, but the rest of Canada does not have such a law. In the rest of Canada, when someone goes to the grocery store and pays with their credit card, the merchant can charge the customer, the consumer, the interchange fees. There is a line on the receipt indicating that the credit card fee is \$2, for example. That is the way it is. In Quebec, the law prohibits businesses from passing those fees on to the consumer. The cost of these interchange fees is passed on to all consumers, even if the customer pays with cash, a debit card or a cheque. I do not know anyone still uses cheques. It was very common in Europe. People used to go to the grocery store and pay by cheque. In Quebec, the cost of interchange fees is spread out and passed on to all consumers. The government could intervene and do what Australia did. It could also set rates similar to those in the European Union. Even the U.S. Federal Reserve is looking into this right now. At the very least, this would reduce the cost of groceries and convenience store purchases by about one percentage point. In the current situation, that is not insignificant.

● (1200)

I would also like to remind members of the technical details.

Routine Proceedings

Visa and Mastercard are two U.S.-based multinational financial services companies. Originally, they were part of a co-operative of financial institutions. Visa and Mastercard became full-fledged companies in 2008 and 2006 respectively. These companies do not offer credit. They are tech companies that use transaction networks to act as intermediaries between financial institutions, merchants and customers. I could go into a lot more detail on this. I would remind members that these companies make a lot of profit because they are a duopoly, so they are able to make a lot of money on the market. What we are asking and what the committee is asking is for this to be regulated. We do not want rhetoric and mini-measures that will allow the government to save face. We want to see real changes to the situation, particularly when it comes to grocery prices.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the fact that what we are witnessing is very much an expensive multi-million dollar game being spearheaded by the leader of the official opposition to the detriment of the House of Commons' being able to deal with a wide spectrum of issues that are important to Canadians.

The Conservatives have brought forward today a concurrence motion that would have the report go back to the committee with the idea of being able to call specific witnesses they have an interest in.

The question I have for the member is this: Does he appreciate the fact that it would appear that the Conservatives want to send things back to standing committees in order to give more direction as to what the committees should be doing, as opposed to allowing them to set their agendas and do the things they want to do? In this case, the Conservatives are asking for a specific timeline also.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, the subject of the report in question is obviously interchange fees. What we are saying is that, in order to lower grocery prices, the government could take action by regulating the fees the companies are charging merchants.

The gist of my speech is that the government is not taking action. The question that was just asked, which has nothing to do with the subject being debated, reflects this. This is unfortunate.

The parliamentary secretary is talking about the House's operating costs. Those are the costs of democracy. With what we are seeing in western societies today, there would undoubtedly be savings if we ceased being a democracy.

The opposition parties have raised a question of privilege. The government refuses to be accountable to members. That is what created the situation we are in now. The government has the power to fix it.

• (1205)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's intervention was about one of the subjects that can affect the pocketbooks of Canadians and small businesses right away;

therefore I think the debate is an important one and a very good use of House time. I have been raising consumer issues steadily for over 20 years here, and the subject of banking fees has not received the attention it deserves.

I have a specific question for my colleague. The Interac situation evolved from the banks' coming together in the 1980s, which was 40 years ago. What innovation has really taken place since that time that would justify continuing to have incredible costs that are disproportionate to those in other countries? What innovation has taken place since the system was instituted and put on consumers? There has been no benefit to the consumer under it.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, we can see how it has evolved over time. If we asked the credit card companies that question, they will say all sorts of things. They will say that everything is serious and that nothing must change. However, when we consider how the situation has evolved over time and compare ourselves to other countries, as the member pointed out, there is no rationale for this. The rationale, as we learned in economics 101, is that the credit card companies control the market via a duopoly, an oligopoly, a quasi-duopoly. This allows them to pad their bottom line a lot more.

The government has the power to step in and change that. I would remind the House that former Liberal MP Linda Lapointe introduced a bill on this subject. The government rebuffed her several times before appointing her parliamentary secretary, which meant that her bill could no longer be debated in the House. The government chose to side with the credit card companies over merchants, grocery stores and consumers.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier today, my riding is home to many SMEs, businesses and members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB for short.

I am in regular contact with the folks at CFIB, and they talk to me about fees and input costs for businesses and SMEs. These are some of their biggest concerns for the future, because with costs going up across the board, their input costs are obviously going up too. With inflation, this is placing an enormous strain on these small businesses and their owners, who are the lifeblood of our local economies.

Can my colleague explain what a difference it would make if the government were willing to stand up to the big bank card companies and how much this would help our SMEs, which are a unique Quebec model?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend, the member for Shefford, for her question. SMEs and merchants in Shefford, and in the rest of Quebec and Canada, are struggling with these excessive fees made possible by the credit card duopoly. These companies are using their power to rake in more money that does not end up back in merchants' or consumers' pockets.

Routine Proceedings

The government's role is to notice this and take action, like Australia did with a law that caps the fees at 0.5%. Here, the fees are three times higher. If the government were willing to stand up to the duopoly and side with businesses and consumers instead, that would mean 1% of sales volume that could produce a profit or help reduce the bill. That would make all the difference for retailers that rely on high sales volumes with very low profit margins.

The government could do something. The minister told us that she would take measures in her 2022 budget. However, she merely outlined some voluntary half measures for the credit card companies to take, and those half measures do not apply to these businesses. That is deplorable. It is clear whose side this government is on. It is on the side of Visa and Mastercard, not on the side of grocery stores and consumers.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not think the member understands that the Conservative Party is manipulating a standing committee, and it is not the first time. The standing committee can choose whatever it wants to talk about, whatever it wants to study, and provide a report. It can determine the individuals it wants to call to committee.

What the Conservatives are doing, and it is not the first time, is bringing forward an amendment to instruct a standing committee, as opposed to allowing the standing committee to have some essence. Periodically, it might be of value for the House of Commons to instruct, but my advice to Bloc members is to realize when they are being conned by the Conservative agenda.

The Conservatives are trying to slip something through to manipulate a standing committee and dictate who should be going to that standing committee, taking away the independence of it. This is not the first time it has happened in the last week. I do not think that is a coincidence.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, we will take the time to analyze the amendment that was moved. However, today, we are debating the report that the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology prepared following its study of banks and the fees that the credit card companies charge merchants. The banks said that the fees were very high and deeply concerning, and they asked that the Competition Bureau start looking into this right away while we continue our study. That is what we are talking about.

My colleague from Mirabel is working on this file and spoke to me about it. He told me that what is happening is serious. In Canada, the interchange fees that the credit card companies charge merchants are far too high. They are three times higher on average than in Australia and much higher than in the European Union. That needs to change. We are raising the alarm. Furthermore, my colleague from Mirabel and his colleagues on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology are obviously free to study whatever topics they want. However, I have full confidence that the committee will be able to do something about this.

What we must bear in mind is that the government urgently needs to take action to better protect SMEs, retailers, grocery

stores, individuals and consumers from the credit card duopoly. It is the government's role to ensure healthy competition in the economy and to prevent duopolies from using their dominant position to make merchants pay or to grab too much market share. However, the government has chosen not to act. All it is offering are half measures and lip service.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my previous colleague for his intervention and for answering questions.

As a New Democrat, my motion got the credit card study going that is in the committee today. Now we have this debate taking place, which I am grateful for because we need more attention put on these fees and outrageous costs to consumers. Yes, the government system can have taxation policies that relate to how people afford certain things and how businesses interact and so forth, but on top of that, regulations are necessary.

Through the Conservatives, the Bloc and even some Liberal members, some really good testimony has come out of the questions that have taken place. I am a bit perplexed, though, because today at committee, the Liberals attacked me when I was questioning issues related to information being shared. They are now opposing this issue, apparently, and attacking us when we talk about fees that are costing Canadians at this very moment way more than the averages across the rest of the globe's industrialized countries.

This should be dealt with right away through regulation. We do not need legislation. It can be done through the finance minister. Evidence coming out quite clearly shows that our interchange fees, which have been adjusted a bit by the government, are not in line with those of other countries, such as Australia and countries in the European Union, and other places. In fact, this has exposed the Liberals' poor conduct on this issue, which has become clear as day. They are basically treating Canadians as second-class citizens when it comes to these fees and when it comes to businesses that have to pay them.

I started one of my questions today talking about Interac and the formation of it. Most Canadians probably do not even know that Interac is owned by the banks. It really came about in the 1980s, 1986 being, I believe, the specific date. They got together to look at how they could cash in on financial transfers that would take place electronically.

Thinking about innovation, I come from the auto sector, and in the 1980s, we saw a certain type of automobile. If we had to pay the same amount for that automobile as we pay right now and its innovation was the same, we would laugh, unless we wanted to collect a classic car and go back to a K-car or something like that from the 1980s. Meanwhile, when we look at how much money has gone—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but the parliamentary secretary is heckling me.

Routine Proceedings

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the parliamentary secretary that it is not time for questions and comments. I know that he is anxious, but there will be 10 minutes for them.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I see that he is not quite listening to what I am saying at this point, but I want to ask the hon. member to please wait until the appropriate time to speak.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to answer questions later.

When we look at how much money there was in the system put in place then versus the so-called innovation now, what have we really gotten out of that? We can look at the fees. I am going to read a few of them out, and members will see why regulation is necessary. Sometimes the lack of competition does not even have to be done by collusion. It can be done basically by consent and by not competing.

Here are the general sending fees for up to \$100: RBC, one dollar to \$1.50 a charge; TD Bank, one dollar to \$1.50 a charge; BMO, one dollar to \$1.50 a charge; CIBC, one dollar to \$1.50 a charge; Scotiabank, one dollar to \$1.50 a charge; and the National Bank of Canada, one dollar to \$1.50 a charge. Basically, everybody in the sandbox is using the same fee and implementation, and nobody is breaking out of that despite the fact that the technology and the way it works are 40 years old.

On top of that, there is what we did during the pandemic. That is part of what has been taking place at the industry committee with regard to the issues at stake. It is why I believe strongly in regulation, especially of interest rates. Because of the pandemic, of automation and of the use of systems in place for points cards, we are transitioning people into new purchasing habits at different interest rates that are harmful to them. If someone has a mortgage, they have a lower interest rate right now. It is one of the better borrowing practices, generally speaking. Hopefully rates will continue to go down, but the interest rate there is just above or below the Bank of Canada rate depending on the financial institution. If someone wants to get a line of credit, it bubbles a bit higher than that, but it is still in that range. As for students loans, as New Democrats, we believe there should not be interest on student loans, but sadly there is. I paid my student loan at 17% at one point. That policy was horrible back in the 1990s. At any rate, students still have a better rate.

What we have been doing is transitioning people into purchasing the food and basics they need on credit cards that have 20% to 30% interest rates. Some are lower, but someone has to have a decent line of credit beforehand, has to pay for the card with a fee or has to be very affluent. Most people are stuck at around a 20% rate for credit cards. What is happening, as we have heard in testimony, is that charges on basics related to living have grown exponentially since the pandemic. That means people are putting groceries on credit, for example, just to get by, with a potential charge of 20%.

We have also heard there is more of a culture of buy now, pay later, with systems in place. They are notoriously part of the furniture industry, which has that type of philosophy. They upsell, making sure people purchase certain amounts and sometimes more. Then if they do not pay by the end of the year or whenever the contract is up, rates could be up to 30%, even higher sometimes. In the meantime, people may lose their job, a loved one may get sick or they may get sick, and they cannot afford the payments anymore.

This motion brings to light the issue of financial management systems, their wealth, their activity in the Canadian economy and what they are really worth. One of the more interesting aspects that we learned is that banks are not even reporting their profit margins on credit cards, borrowing and lending, how much they are making. That is a policy that has been put in place. From a regulatory standpoint, the minister could change it today and require reporting.

Coincidentally, as I mentioned, all the different banks have the same policy that they do not report, because if they do not have to do it, they will not do it. At the same time, we do not know how much we are subsidizing their profit margins, even though we know for a fact that despite the costs of running the credit card system, their profits have skyrocketed, especially because we used public policies in this chamber to backstop the banks during the pandemic and before that when the financial system collapsed. We did all those things.

Maybe the Liberals are a bit shy on this because when I was here back in the day, John Manley tried to make our banks like the American banks. I will give the Bloc Québécois credit because the New Democrats and the Bloc were the only ones who fought off the nonsense of wanting to Americanize our banks.

• (1220)

We saw what took place with regard to the institutions in the U.S. I have all the presentation decks from every single year, which said that Canada's banks have to become like the American banks, that they cannot survive here anymore and that they ought to make sure they are different. They said many different things. I still have all the presentations they made to me during all those years. It was John Manley who tried to move the system to Canada, but we defeated them and stopped them.

I want to pay special tribute to Judy Wasylcia-Leis, the former New Democrat from Winnipeg, who fought tooth and nail on the issue constantly to stop Americanization from happening. Thank goodness we had that. It was funny because the banks came back later and said they survived the financial issues of the United States because they were different. They basically took credit for the fact that they lost their fight to become Americanized.

At any rate, let us go back to the particular issue at hand, especially coming from an economy like Windsor's, when we see value out of production. Workers have often said that our production value needs to keep going up and up in order for us to compete. We have to look at our financial measurement matters. Are they really contributing to the Canadian economy or are they a drag on the Canadian economy?

Routine Proceedings

Owners of some of the small businesses like convenience stores, retailers and all those different elements will tell us that the fees they have been paying are significant. On top of that, the reduction of fees, which is still modest compared to what is in Australia and the European Union and elsewhere, may not have been passed on; we have heard that from Stripe.

We have heard specific testimony, and it was really kind of shocking that Stripe basically did not care what Canada did; it was not going to pass on the savings it had. Where are the savings going to go? They are going to go internationally to the people who actually have investment in the systems.

The Liberals do not get credit for what they believe they should get by lowering the fees, because it has been exposed that what they have requested is very modest compared to what is taking place in other parts of the world.

Here we are, deciding what to do next with regard to the issue. I have done a lot of work on frauds, rip-offs and all the different stuff that can take place, especially on our phones. In industry committee, one of the things I was proud of was getting a study on fraud. We have seen, on our phone, how many times we get a text message or something to bait us into losing some of our money.

As I point out all the time, we pay for our phone or device. We also pay for the services and for all the maintenance on it. On top of getting charged for all of that, we get abused as a customer through fraud. It is the same thing with the fees that are being charged. We pay for our phone, for the data and for the system. We do all those things and we do the work, and the banks still get the same amount in fees, or more. We do not see somebody at the counter anymore; there is no job created for that.

We will do more transactions, so we should actually have a reduction in fees. Ironically, when we look at the charts provided by the banks, the only argument economically has always been that when we buy more, we should pay less; however, when it comes to Interac fees and banking fees, the more we transfer means the more we pay.

I do not know what the difference is in terms of the financial cost to an institution specifically related to electronically moving money. What is the difference whether it is one dollar, five dollars, \$10, \$1,000 or \$3,000? I do not know, but apparently it requires more labour, or different labour, for those different amounts, because the fees are reflected basically in that.

I do not understand that, and the institutions have never been able to explain it. It just another way of gouging, in my opinion. Again, when it is expanded exponentially, it is really a cost on the whole economic system. Some of the best fraud cases have been perpetrated by some of the people who work at financial institutions or other places; they nip a couple of cents off purchases or transactions, so nobody really notices.

• (1225)

People should always check their grocery store receipts, and some places are trying to move to a system where customers do not even get a receipt anymore. Some groceries are taxed and some are not; it is dependent upon the type of product and the quantity of the

product. For example, with granola bars, if there are five in a box they are taxed, but if there are six in a box they are not taxed. Retailers market and change their practices so they can get further profits out of the system. People should always get their receipts.

The point I was trying to make is that some of the biggest fraud cases involve skimming just a bit so it is not noticed, but the volume is so high that at the end of the day, the wealth is supersignificant. That has happened many times, and it is the same thing with some of the fees with credit cards, Interac and all the different elements.

I will use bank machines as an example. It costs three dollars to use a different bank than one's own, and people put up with that fee in the moment. However, when we start adding up the fees, and let us say we are doing this once a month or however often it might be, it becomes very significant in the Canadian economy. If it is being done collectively across the board, it becomes a drain on the system.

I come from a manufacturing town, and we were told so many times that the future of this country was through getting rid of manufacturing, that globalization was the end of it and that third world countries and others would do the manufacturing. We saw how it worked out in the pandemic, and it was not true. In fact, reshoring is taking place across North America. We have to compete with the U.S. on that, and we are now doing massive subsidization to corporations to bring them back.

New Democrats fought it at that time and said it was wrong, because the promise was that financial institutions and the service industry were going to rescue all employment. It did not happen. There was some growth in the sector that took place, but it was not reflected in the Canadian economy in employment and good jobs. Also, now there is a decline of some of the institutions, through automation and other things that went through, and we are now without the jobs and the services but are still paying some of the highest fees out there. Why is it? How good is that for the economy?

I would rather have small and medium-sized businesses getting a break on fees through regulation, which is something we can control right now, than have some trickle-down economic theory that is supposed to give them maybe a tax reduction that they may not see and that depends upon how much they have coming in through their business model, in terms of profit margins and so forth.

What we can do by regulating the fees lower right now and ensuring that they are passed on is to ensure that they go to consumers right away; that they are taken out of the multinational institutions, many of which pay more taxes across the planet than here in Canada; and that the small and medium-sized businesses get the money they need and deserve. More importantly, we need to ensure that the fees become more reflective of the service and the value of what they should be paying for.

Routine Proceedings

I go back to that because transaction fees are out of whack with the cost of doing transactions. Nobody should be gouged through fraud by a government being neglectful on regulatory powers, just like there should not be fraud through the abuse of someone trying to do a criminal activity against them. We can control that in the House, so I appreciate the committee and the work we have been doing trying to get fees down, even with the cost of groceries, expenses and all the different things affecting Canadians right now.

We do not have to wait for a budget to adjust some of these things, and we do not have to wait for an announcement or a private member's bill; they can be done immediately by the minister, with the regulatory powers the minister has. The break can be passed on right away, which can also filter into the Canadian economy to create more wealth, more activity, more investment and more jobs, and better reflect the value of financial institutions and the contribution they make for productivity in the Canadian ecosystem.

Right now, financial institutions have been protected a number of different times. As I mentioned, before the pandemic, before the financial crisis, significant government revenues went to stabilize the banks and the financial sector, including the provision of loan guarantees and other activities.

• (1230)

During COVID we allowed the financial institutions to continue their practices as we shifted the economy, with lockdowns and other types of restrictions that required the increased use of their systems. This was not through competition or by use of the money we had there, but by moving people, with intervention from the government, into a system that allows more abuse and dominance with respect to interest rates, costs and services, not from innovation in the market but by public policy.

That is why it is warranted, as New Democrats argue, that public policy should be used to rein in some fairness for consumers right now. We did our part. Canadians did their part. They put their taxpayer money behind the banks, the loans and the things they had before to stabilize different things. They got moved into having to borrow and pay for certain things with higher interest rates and charges because of the pandemic.

Canadians never got anything back from doing that. In fact costs have gone up, as has inflation. On top of that, new taxation models have been introduced to consumers with respect to tipping, which is coming on taxes and not just on the goods and services.

For those reasons, we support continuing the work of the committee. Again, we implore that we do not need legislation or a private member's bill; we need the Liberals to act where they should have acted before and rein in some fairness for Canadian consumers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my apologies for throwing the member off. He made me have a flashback when he made reference to the the K-car and the Caravan, two vehicles that really saved Chrysler.

Having said that, the member brings up a lot of very interesting points. There are some fees within the banking industry with which

I believe we should be, as much as possible, aggressive with our financial institutions.

One of the things we do not hear as much about is our credit unions. I have found that the credit unions play a very important role in ensuring that there is at least a bit more competition. I wonder whether my friend could provide his thoughts and comments in regard to credit unions. I personally believe that they play such a vital role in protecting the interests of consumer and in hopefully bringing down actual costs.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the question from the parliamentary secretary is one that does not get a lot of coverage and has not been talked about as much. Part of the reason is that credit unions are owned by the people in the community who are the users. The profits go back to them, so they can, yes, provide some innovation. Sometimes their margins are very close to those of the banks. One could argue that there could be more competition there.

At the end of the day, the real benefit is the fact that the people who are part of a credit union are also shareholders; that is the difference. Banks have private shareholders who could be based in different places all over the planet, and not everybody can be part of that by buying stock options and so forth, whereas when people join a credit union, they become a member and contribute to their own wealth through the different services.

• (1235)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to make an observation about the debate in response to something the parliamentary secretary said earlier. He complained about the idea that there would be an amendment that would provide an instruction to the committee. He said that these are games and that we should let the committee make its own decisions.

I had a recollection and did some research on this. Do members know what was the Prime Minister's first act when he was elected to Parliament, in 2008? He drew first for the private members' bill draw, and the motion he put before the House, his very first act as a member of Parliament, was, if members can believe it, an instruction to a committee:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be instructed to consider the introduction in Canada of a national voluntary service policy....

Does this not suggest that the parliamentary secretary, while he would like to wiggle out of any accountability for how the government has failed consumers and taxpayers in so many ways, is hypocritically trying to say that we cannot instruct a committee? The first act of the Prime Minister in the House was to do precisely that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, it failed. The motion never passed in the House of Commons. I really do not know what else to say.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague works hard at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology to defend small businesses. Is this not another sign of Liberal incompetence?

The government says it took action, but we now learn that there was no agreement and that it was actually just a unilateral, temporary, voluntary decision. All these words confirm that without a stricter law in place, like Australia's, these big companies will not act.

If my colleague truly wants to defend SMEs, would he not agree that this government has run its course?

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, under the current model, banks do not have to pass on the savings right now. Interestingly enough, in testimony today, I asked about that. One of the officials talked about how our loan systems were going to be reduced, with respect to predatory financing, to 35% maximum. It is at 60% right now. I still could not get a proper answer with regard to what the penalties would be and the different issues that would take place if someone broke that law.

Ironically, the Government of Canada borrows around the Bank of Canada rate, but Canadians have to pay interest rates of up to 35%. With respect to fairness, how does that make sense? The government can borrow at a rate that is very low and is very much structured. Meanwhile rates are up to 35%, and on top of that, we still do not know the penalties and so forth.

The member for South Shore—St. Margarets raised the issue of Stripe not passing on the savings, and we will probably have some more work on that. That is a very important one because it has become rather iconic.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Windsor West, is very knowledgeable about this. He has done so much work to make life more affordable for Canadians.

One of the things he talked about was trickle-down economics. Obviously, we have seen that this is a failed economic strategy. The Liberals' strategy of asking nicely has also failed Canadians. However, what I would like the member to talk about is how the impacts of these fees are felt disproportionately by those who live in poverty, how people who are already struggling have to pay a disproportionate amount when these fees are in place.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I did not touch on that but I should have. My former colleague, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, did a lot of work on this on payday loans, and this is a good example. Even if people have a government cheque that is guaranteed, they can get be gouged for cashing it, yet there really is no risk whatsoever. Many banks moved away from cashing cheques without exponential fees, or they opened the system to have payday loans come in. That is a loss for the most vulnerable, often the most poor, and also for people who need money at a very delicate time in their lives for one reason or another.

That is taking money out of small and medium-sized businesses and taking money out of rent. It is making food, health care costs and all those different things rise. That is a really important notion of all of this. Also, if people have \$3,000 in their bank account, they do not pay any fees. However, if they do not have that \$3,000, they pay more fees. That is wrong.

• (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, out of respect for the member, I do not want to marginalize the issue, because it really is an important issue, but the Conservatives are really much more concerned about my previous question. I would ask for the member to provide his thoughts on this.

Today, the Conservatives say that they want this report to go to the industry and technology committee. They have a number of speakers whom they want to hear on this, and then the committee has to report back by December 17. The other day, they moved that another standing committee, public accounts, deal with another issue, call someone like Mark Carney before the committee and report back within 21 days. These are two that just popped up in this last week.

My concern is that the Conservative Party is using the House to set the agendas of standing committees, when standing committees have the ability to deal with the issues, including the issue that we are talking about today. The standing committee could in fact meet, discuss the issue, have the presenters come forward and set a deadline for itself.

Does the member have any concerns that the Conservatives might be manipulating for other political objectives?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, all I can deal with is what is in front of me. I appreciate the work that has been taking place in industry committee. It has generally been pretty good for the most part. We need to talk more about economics and issues related to fees. In my opinion, what is happening to Canadians is fraud. That is very important.

I cannot speak to any motivation, but I appreciate the motion coming forward. I appreciated talking about these issues in industry committee and studying the credit card information I put forward, and I received support from all political parties on it. I just want to see us get something done.

If something comes out of this today to bring light to the issue so we can get reduction of fees and services so that they are more fair for consumers and help the Canadian economy, so be it. I am glad to participate in that. If the only thing I can control is to contribute to that movement, then I am happy to be part of this.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a really important conversation and debate. Our government is committed to addressing the cost of living, helping out small and medium-sized businesses and also protecting consumers. This is something about which the Liberals, residents of my riding, Pierrefonds—Dollard, and, I am sure, all parliamentarians care deeply.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to tell the story of a small business owner I visited just two weeks ago in my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard. Her name is Paola and she works really hard each and every week, six days a week. She owns a small business called Tazza di Mattina, which has coffee, coffee machines and repairs coffee machines.

I had an important conversation with her about a government program that is related to leaning on the credit card industry to ensure the costs that owners of small and medium business have to bear in consumer transactions are reduced. I let her know that Visa and Mastercard fees for small businesses would be reduced as of October 19. We know that a reduction of credit card fees will mean better prices for consumers and that fee increases are not passed on to them. The government's policy to protect and defend small businesses is really impactful.

I grew up in a household that lived, survived and had everything we needed because of a small-business owner, my dad. My dad and mom brought a family of six into this world. Our family lived off a small business, so I personally know the realities of what it means for a family to have everything its needs when things might be tight. That is the reality of many Canadians. I appreciate and empathize with Canadians. In general, they feel squeezed. That is why our government is meeting the moment at each and every step. With respect to the credit cards and small and medium-sized businesses, that is one key thing we are doing.

A second key thing is a code of conduct related to the credit card industry to protect one million businesses. That will also help to meet the moment. We are also leaning on the banking industry so that we ensure individuals have tailored mortgage relief available to them.

I am sharing my time, Madam Speaker, with the member for Winnipeg North.

Another key aspect of meeting the moment is expanding low-cost accounts and also no-cost options when Canadians are opening bank accounts. The government is also lowering NSF fees, which is critical. Once in a while, some of us have had a bounced cheque. It used to happen to me as a student. Those fees of \$25, or however much they cost today, hit hard, especially if someone has a lean income. Those things matter.

Today, being in the Commons with the governing party, I often think about my life as a student, a young person, and in my career. I think about what those fees meant and how the measures we are implementing today matter for Canadians and small businesses. We are doing a lot within our government to meet the moment and address the cost of living. Yes, costs did rise during the pandemic. We all went to the grocery stores. We saw the increase in price of fruits and vegetables, and that hit us, without question.

• (1245)

Thankfully, since then, inflation has come under control and the Bank of Canada has reduced interest rates. Things are easier for people who are renewing mortgages and for those who are entering the housing market.

Our government has also had some key accomplishments, such as child care, which is a key win of our government. It allows

mothers who choose to work to enter the workforce and to know that their children will receive quality care. I will just share about my own family background again. I was raised by my mother at home, as were my five younger siblings. There was a choice to do that as a household. I know that not all Canadian households can make that choice. Some families need child care in order to survive. That is why our initiative, to make child care affordable and to expand that across the country, is so important.

Dental care is a recent initiative of our government. That is also really important. In our entourage, our families and our friendship circles, we all know seniors, persons with disabilities or young people who have benefited. Soon, all Canadians will be benefiting from this.

If we just think about these programs for a moment, they are meeting the moment. They are helping to address the cost of living and the needs of Canadians.

To that, I will add pharmacare. I had a conversation with a gentleman about three months ago, while driving between Montreal and Ottawa. He told me how important diabetes medication at no cost is to him, how much he relies on that medication, how it had put a big hole in his wallet, and how he is really grateful for us, as a government and as a country, for doing that.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, I see the disability benefit as novel and super impactful. It will help alleviate the situation in which persons with disabilities of working age with modest income find themselves today. It will not solve everything, but it is a clear and firm step in the right direction. This benefit is being introduced and will be in effect this summer. It is being done in addition to existing provincial benefits that people receive. It is a proud moment for our country. As a member of the governing party, I am really happy that we are doing this.

I go back to the idea of meeting Paola in her small business, and the initiatives that our government has done and continues to do.

At some point in the future, Canadians will be making a choice about who they want to see governing our country. It is really important for Canadians to reflect upon the policies and programs that we as a Liberal government have implemented from child care, dental care, pharmacare and the disability benefit, which will be implemented this summer, with money in people's pockets, to the measures I mentioned with respect to small businesses, where 27% of credit card fees will be reduced for small and medium-sized businesses. Those things are critical.

What I would say is that those programs and initiatives, and that sort of perspective of meeting the moment, will be taken away if it is not our Liberal government here in this House.

Routine Proceedings

That is something I would like to leave with viewers who are watching. I would like Canadians to just hold that idea, and ask whether we want these programs to continue into the future. I am sure we do. Do we want everyone to be uplifted? I am sure that we all agree to that. Let us continue.

• (1250)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the 10-minute speech by the parliamentary secretary about the issue we are debating here, which is Interac fees and, in particular, the anti-competitive nature of what is going on with e-transfer fees, and I did not hear a single line about it. There was one line at the beginning of his speech that claimed a tangential element, merchant fees, and that the Minister of Finance claimed they were going to reduce the fees that credit card companies charge merchants.

However, one of the big companies that has a 20% market share and charges these merchant fees is a company called Stripe, which has refused to do this. Mark Carney sits on the board of that company. He is on the board of the company that is refusing the voluntary request of the finance minister.

Could the parliamentary secretary share with the House why the adviser to the Prime Minister on the economy is refusing the request of the finance minister?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Madam Speaker, it is really important when we take the names of eminent Canadians, lift their reputations in the House and recognize the contributions that people make to this country and the international community, that we do so with respect.

As a parliamentarian, I wish that the way all parliamentarians connect individually would be reflected in our comments and how we deal with each other during question period and debate. So often I reflect on that and that is why I mention it now.

• (1255)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to wish the Lebanese Canadian community a happy Lebanese Heritage Month. I wanted to make sure I took the opportunity.

We have seen massive fees put on remittances that are sent around the world by Canadians who have family in other countries. I am wondering if the member has any comments on that and how those fees need to be regulated and controlled, as we look at these important issues.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Madam Speaker, just as the member opposite did, I definitely want to recognize the importance of Lebanese Heritage Month. I went to the flag-raising ceremony here on Parliament Hill today. There were many Canadians of Lebanese background who came to the raising of the flag, along with parliamentarians of all stripes, which is so important.

With respect to the question from the member opposite, it is really important for these questions to be put to the committee itself. It is a commentary on this whole debate that the appropriate place for this debate is at committee. That is where it belongs. This debate should be focused at the expert committee.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, we have not been able to get a lot of work done in this House in the last month or so because Conservatives are continuing to filibuster their own motion.

I am wondering if the member can comment on how important it is that we get down to the business that Canadians want us to be debating now, instead of games and tactics to prevent work in the House from occurring.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Madam Speaker, I will differ a little with my friend from my own party. We do get work done in this House. It is just that in the chamber right now, there is a stonewall because of the Conservative Party refusing to allow us to move ahead.

Where I differ is that we do get work done in this Commons in committees, and each and every parliamentarian is working hard. I can say that I am working hard. We are being stonewalled because the Conservative Party is not allowing us to get the work done that we need to get done. I plead with the Conservative Party to please let us do our work.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate that members want to see how much time they have, but they need to make sure that their alarms do not go off and they need to make sure that their phones are not on vibration because it also creates problems for the interpreters. I just want to remind members to please be mindful about the location of their phone and what mode it is on. We need to make sure that the health and safety of our interpreters is first and foremost.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been an interesting process over the last number of weeks. For those who are trying to follow what is taking place, allow me to attempt to summarize it. What they are really witnessing is what I would suggest is a multi-million dollar political game that is being led by the leader of the Conservative Party because he has determined that it is in his self-interest and the interests of the Conservative Party of Canada to continue playing this silly, expensive game at a substantial cost. As opposed to participating in this filibuster, what we are actually witnessing is an opposition party that, I would ultimately argue, is in contempt, or nearing contempt, of the House of Commons today.

It should not surprise people because the leader of the Conservative Party was the parliamentary secretary to former prime minister Stephen Harper, who was held in contempt of Parliament, the first prime minister in the history of the Commonwealth and the only one to this very day to have been held in contempt. It speaks volumes, in terms of the character and the personality of the leader of the Conservative Party today.

Routine Proceedings

Let us look at what the Conservatives are doing, and I do not say it lightly. In fact, I have recommended that every member of the Conservative caucus read the Hill Times story that was published on October 31. It was written by Steven Chaplin. Steven Chaplin is the former senior legal counsel in the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel. Let me just quote two very important things that should be highlighted because that is why we have the debate that we are having today, and I am going to get into that very shortly. Here is what Steven Chaplin has to say about the multi-million dollar game that the leader of the Conservative Party is playing:

It's time for the House [of Commons] to admit it was wrong, and to move on....

There has now been three weeks of debate on a questionable matter of privilege based on the misuse of the House' power to order producing documents....

The article goes on, and here is where people really need to understand this point because we get Conservative after Conservative talking, whether about this motion or the matter of privilege that the Conservatives introduced over four weeks ago. The Conservative Party says, "just produce the papers and then the issue will end." We cannot produce the papers. The Conservatives know that. Here is what Steven Chaplin has to say on the issue, in terms of the game that the Conservatives are playing:

It is time for the House to admit its overreach before the matter inevitably finds it[s] way to the courts which do have the ability to determine and limit the House's powers, often beyond what the House may like.

This is not me. This is a professional; someone who understands what is taking place in the House of Commons. It is the leader of the Conservative Party today who is using his opposition powers to prevent important things from taking place in the House because it is his self-interest and the interests of the Conservative Party and not the interests of Canadians that are being served by this tactic; not to mention the millions of dollars being thrown away.

The deputy House leader, earlier today, talked about legislation. Take a look at what is on the Order Paper and has been on the Order Paper for days now: the Canadian Citizenship Act. Citizenship is important to Canadians. By not passing this legislation, some individuals are being denied their citizenship.

• (1300)

There is Bill C-66, the military court reforms, which would take sexual abuse issues out of military courts and put them into the civil courts. Also, we have Bill C-33, on the rail and marine safety issue, which is talking about economic supply lines. If we want to talk about improving the economy, this is one of the things that we should be discussing. My colleague emphasized Bill C-63, the on-line harms act. We can think of pictures being posted on the Internet without consent from individuals over 18, as well as the harm that is being caused to children. These are the types of substantial issues that we should be talking about and voting on to see them go to committee, but instead, we are playing this game.

Fast-forward to today, when we have a motion about banking and banking fees. I can assure members that banking fees are a very serious issue. My constituents are concerned about banking fees, whether they are for using an ATM machine or the monthly charges. There is also the interest that is applied in many different ways. There is a litany of issues with banking fees. I would love the opportunity to talk for 20-plus minutes on that issue.

The problem is that this feeds into what the Conservatives are wanting us to do. The Conservatives, and this is coming from the leader of the Conservative's office, are not only saying that they want to take control of what is taking place on the floor of the House of Commons, but also wanting to start dipping more and more into instructing standing committees on what they should be doing. They have the Bloc completely fooled on this. It will be interesting to see who votes in favour of it.

Members can think about this: The Conservatives, not once but twice, as Mark Carney was brought up late last week, have brought in an amendment to a concurrence motion to send the report back to committee for it to be further studied while calling for certain witnesses, and they have each had a deadline to get back to the House. However, these standing committees can determine their own agendas and who they want to call before them. They do not have to be instructed by the leader of the Conservative Party on what they should be doing. This is a very disturbing pattern, which we have now seen with two concurrence motions that were brought forward by the Conservative Party.

I would argue that, ultimately, the leader of the Conservative Party is not only trying to dictate what we can and cannot talk about on the floor of the House of Commons, but also starting to reach into the different standing committees. He could have just advised, and said, "Well, look, send this back to the committee". We could also do what we usually do, which is to vote concurrence on a report, so it would go on its way, and just allow the standing committee to do what it wants. However, there is an agenda there. It is a very selfish agenda that is being driven by the leader of the Conservative Party and the Conservative House leadership team, at a substantial cost. As I said, it is a multi-million dollar game that is being played.

The Conservative leader needs to start putting the interests of Canadians ahead of his own self-serving interests and the interests of the Conservative Party. There is a lot more work that we can be doing on the floor of the House of Commons.

• (1305)

We need to respect that standing committees do have the ability to do what is being proposed here. We need the leader of the Conservative Party to stop abusing his authority as the leader of the opposition and reflect on when he was a parliamentary secretary and his prime minister was held in contempt of Parliament.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, it really is quite humorous to hear the parliamentary secretary talk about fiscal responsibility. He is a member of a government that has not hit a single budget target and has added more debt for the government and Canadian taxpayers than all other prime ministers since Confederation.

Routine Proceedings

That aside, on the issue that he raises about process, perhaps since that member is not a member of the industry committee, which this motion refers to, he is not aware of the fact that the parliamentary secretary for industry has been filibustering every motion that we have brought forward on this study. Whether they are on document production from Mastercard, where he is protecting Mastercard from scrutiny, or on document production and hearing witnesses from Stripe, which has the pseudo minister of finance on its board, Mr. Mark Carney, he is protecting his folks and stopping them from going forward. We have to come to the House to get an order because the government will not stop filibustering.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Canadians and all parliamentarians of all political stripes need to be aware of the tactic that the Conservative leader is using. Members can think about it. In a simple motion, he wants to instruct. There is not just one. From the last seven days, here are two that I am aware of. There is no doubt that there will be others saying—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is an experienced member and knows that we cannot hold up props. I believe that is what he just did.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure what those documents were, but if they were the write-ups of the motions themselves, and if he was pointing to them, he knows that he is not to use them as props

The hon. parliamentary secretary can finish his thought before we go to the next question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, they were actually the amendments themselves.

Having said that, I can tell members that it is a scary situation when we have a leader of the official opposition abusing his authority to the degree we are witnessing today. It says a lot. Heaven forbid that he will sit in the prime minister's chair, from which he will want to continue his control over standing committees. People need to be aware of that. That is why they put in deadlines. That is why they are dictating who appears before PROC. That is, I would ultimately argue, an issue that we should all be concerned about, and it does not matter which political party one is from. Standing committees should not be mandated and told by the leader of the official opposition what they will do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have trouble understanding why my colleague opposite is so indignant. I have witnessed him expressing his indignation again and again, day after day, for nearly a month now.

The Bloc Québécois offered the government a way out so that we could move forward and end the standoff. We sent it a proposal that would benefit Quebecers and maybe even Canadians. We asked it to boost retirement benefits for people aged 65 to 74 and to pass our supply management bill, but the government balked. Now

it is accusing us of not giving it a free pass, when it is the government that has no desire to work with us.

I am hard pressed to understand the government's indignation and unwillingness to resolve the situation. Perhaps it is because, ultimately, this impasse suits them. I would like my colleague to talk to us about this. When there is a standoff in Parliament, there are no confidence votes and, in any event, there is no legislative agenda. Perhaps the government likes it that way. Is that possible?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to put it as clearly as possible, the Conservatives are challenging the government on a false pretense. They are asking us to believe the Conservative Party and disagree with the RCMP of Canada, the Auditor General of Canada and other law experts who have indicated that what is being asked cannot be delivered. We either have to agree with the Conservatives or listen to the experts. We are going to listen to the experts.

The other option then is that we need to have an opposition party that comes onside to help us get through the behaviour of the Conservative Party. To date, we have not had that type of support, so we continue to be held hostage to that multi-million dollar game that the Conservatives have chosen to play.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are in a filibuster, yet the hon. member, who takes up probably 80% of his caucus's airtime, is engaging in the filibuster. I have heard the member for Waterloo talk about how women in the Liberal caucus cannot be heard. I have a question on principle.

Will the hon. member finally sit down and let other members of the Liberal backbench finally have a chance to engage and speak, so that women in his caucus can be heard?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member can believe whatever he would like to believe. He can come to Winnipeg North and say that I should stop talking in the House of Commons. I do not think that is the type of advocacy anyone should be promoting, to encourage people to stop talking.

I take this issue very seriously. If the NDP, in particular that member, feels that I am talking too much, that is his problem, not mine.

• (1315)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this motion. I am going to do something unusual. I am actually going to speak to the motion, unlike most of what has happened in this discussion.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member for Waterloo entered this place, while inappropriately dressed, just to heckle me. If they want to come in and participate in the debate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is not to indicate whether someone has come into or exited the chamber. I would remind members to please be respectful to each other. If members wish to have conversations across the way, then they should step outside the chamber to have those conversations.

Routine Proceedings

I have another point of order from the hon. member for Waterloo.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I really do not appreciate the comments about my attire and what I choose to wear. I do feel that I am appropriately dressed for this chamber, and you just recognized me.

I would also like to put on the record that I have no problem with the member for Winnipeg North speaking and representing the views of Canadians in the House—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I have asked members to please be respectful of each other so that we can move on with the business of the House.

We have another point of order from the hon. government deputy House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, given the fact that the member has come into the House to display that she is not happy with the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member cannot say whether a member is in the House or not.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, given the fact that the member has shown that she is concerned and upset with the fact that the NDP member commented on her attire, perhaps it would be appropriate to ask the member from the NDP to rise to apologize to the member for Waterloo.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Based on what I have ruled on, and as I said, if members want to have conversations, they can take them out of the chamber, I just think that we need to be respectful of each other. I would hope that we would be able to continue with the orders of the day without having another point of order.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I believe it is inappropriate for a member to speak about how another member is dressed.

I would think that the honourable thing to do would be to ask the member to apologize. I do not think he is a fashion guru, and it is inappropriate to say that what a member is wearing is inappropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I already gave a warning that members should not be speaking about what individuals are wearing or be yelling across the way.

The hon. member did come into the House and did not ask for a withdrawal or an apology. She did mention that it was not appropriate. I already spoke to that.

We are going to go on with the orders of the day, which is continuing debate with the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets. I know he is anxious to continue. If the hon. member wishes, he can restart his speech, given everything that has taken place.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, points of order usually do not happen until I have started my speech. I will do something unusual, as I said a few moments ago. I am actually going to speak to the concurrence motion that is before the House right now, unlike most of the speakers today.

We are here discussing a motion to have a further detailed study on what are called the fees related to Interac. A lot of folks watching use e-transfers to send money to their friends or kids through electronic banking. We have discovered that there are what we might call usury or monopolistic fees happening.

We have a challenge in our economy right now. We are not very productive. We have been losing our productivity over the last nine years. That is due to three main things: First, this country has too much debt. More than half of that debt has been generated by the Liberals over nine years. That has caused strain on our system. Second, we are not selling enough of what we make to the world anymore; most of those issues have been generated by the antidevelopment policies of the government, which has squashed our resource industries, both renewable and non-renewable. Third, we have an oligopolistic economy, which is the federal government—

● (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have another point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I think all women in the chamber now need to have the approval of the NDP. I want to determine if my attire is in order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It was not a point of order; the hon. member is making this a point of debate. As I indicated, the issue has already been addressed. I would hope that members will be able to move on.

The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, what we have here, besides interruptions, is the issue that the Liberals do not want to talk about. That is why they are not doing anything about the oligopolistic economy, which includes the fees that Canadians pay for their banking services and, in particular, the fees around a company called Interac. It is on the back of our cards. Interac is an association, but it is basically owned by the four big banks: RBC, CIBC, Scotiabank and TD. Then there is a fifth one, Desjardins. They own it, and they charge a fee any time we move money around. They do about 19 million transactions a day in Canada, but one issue is moving our own money to somebody else through an e-transfer. I am sure members will be shocked to learn that the two companies that chair the board of Interac, which are RBC and TD, get a preferential rate over all other financial services companies. They only charge themselves six cents; they charge smaller and smaller financial institutions, particularly those that are not part of the Interac board, almost 44¢ to 46¢ per transaction. That is huge.

I understand that there is a \$1.50 charge on each end on that. Technically, that is a three-dollar charge. If someone does not keep a minimum balance in their account, they get a three-dollar charge from the banks. RBC, TD and the big guys are only paying six cents for that transaction, so they are making a 98% gross margin. If there is a small credit union that is not part of the government-protected oligopoly of Interac, which basically has a complete monopoly on the movement of money in Canada, then it is out of luck. It must pay 44¢ to 46¢ to the big banks that own Interac for this service.

That is why we are here. It is because we had witnesses in committee who refused to table any of their fee structures, even though they are a protected government business. We also had witnesses who came before the committee in the credit card study on the issue of what is called the “interchange fee”. The government made a big announcement that it is reducing the fees that small businesses have to pay to credit card companies for every transaction. It is usually a per cent, somewhere between 1% and 2.9% of the transaction, if someone pays with their credit card, that a small business has to pay to the big banks and the Visa card companies.

There are companies that are the plumber of the system that do that, and one of them is called Stripe. Another one is called Moneris; some may have heard of it. Moneris agreed to the voluntary fee cut that the government asked for, but Stripe decided that it was not going to. Its representatives said that it is because they are being charged a new GST fee and cannot afford it. It is actually a GST fee that they were paying all along, but it was delayed for 12 months because of a court action. However, Stripe representatives used that as an excuse, either because they are greedy or because they are just not as efficient as the other providers of that service. We will be the judge of which one it is.

An interesting thing is that a person on the board of Stripe, which is one of the biggest companies in the world at doing this, is Mark Carney, the special adviser to the Prime Minister on the economy. He is the boss above the Minister of Finance, and he is the next Liberal leader. This is the same fellow who is on the board of a company called Brookfield; the entire company has just decided to move from Toronto to New York to avoid paying Canadian taxes.

Mr. Carney preaches that Canadians should pay more for everything with a carbon tax; carbon tax Carney loves the carbon tax and thinks it should be 61¢ a litre. At the same time, he moves all his business interests to the U.S. and avoids the things that the Department of Finance is trying to do. This is the character of an individual who supposedly aspires to be Prime Minister of Canada. However, he thinks it is better for the companies that he sits on the boards of to dodge Canadian taxes and move to the U.S., where they can pay lower taxes.

I do not know why carbon tax Carney wants to help the newly elected President Trump by moving his head office to New York. Apparently, he admires him more than he admires the current Prime Minister, or he would not be doing this.

As such, why is it that the Liberals continue to filibuster in committee to stop these examinations from happening? The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Industry has done nothing but filibuster every time we bring up a motion to bring carbon tax Carney,

Routine Proceedings

disclose the financials of Mastercard or disclose the financials of Stripe, which carbon tax Carney is on the board of. The parliamentary secretary does not have the guts to vote against it. He just keeps talking and talking, stopping us from getting to a vote. That is the reason we are in this situation in the House, and we have to use the power of the majority to try to get that study done. It is because the parliamentary secretary is too afraid of having this debate in committee.

● (1325)

It makes me wonder what that individual is trying to cover up for the government by preventing these studies from happening. We had one of the banking executives from RBC, who is co-chair of Interac and sits on their board, before committee. One of our members asked him a number of times if he knew the fees of the company he is on the board of, where he represents his bank. His bank owns this company, which is called Interac. He said he does not know the fees.

I have served on private boards and Crown boards. I always knew what the fees were of the businesses I was on the board of. It defied believability that this senior banking executive in Canada would not even know the fees he charges or gets charged on Interac. This is the kind of obfuscation we see happening on this credit card study, and that has prompted this motion. In fact, all the banking heads were before the committee, and we told them we did not want them to betray their confidential commercial stuff, but they all judge themselves publicly on something called “return on equity”. That is how much profit a year the company makes per share that shareholders own. The companies overall, the banks overall, have anywhere from a 10% to 15% return on equity. This means that, for a \$10 share, they make \$1 to \$1.50 in profit a year.

We asked them to share what their credit card business is as a percentage, not the overall revenue numbers or their expenses, as they do on their overall business. What do they make in their credit card business? They said it is all confidential. Of course it is confidential. Some may know that I used to work for a bank at one time, a long time ago. I had hair then. When I worked for the bank on Bay Street, it had a return on equity of 52%.

Routine Proceedings

Some might call that loansharking, but that is the level of return they get. That is why they do not want to do it. That is why the government does not want to do it. We had finance officials in industry committee this morning. We asked them if they knew those numbers on their credit card business. They said they never asked. We had the senior finance officials in committee this morning and asked if they ever looked at the anti-competitive pricing of Interac and what they do between the owners of RBC, TD, Scotiabank and CIBC, and what they give themselves as a cut rate versus all the other financial institutions. They said they have never looked at it.

I asked if the Minister of Finance cares about competitive behaviour in the industry she regulates. They said they do not look at it. That it is somebody else's job; it is the Competition Bureau's job. It is not their job to look at policy and decide whether the industry they regulate is competitive. I asked the same question about these great interchange fees and carbon tax Carney's company, Stripe, which is refusing to abide by the Minister of Finance's order.

I asked if they look at anti-competitive behaviour on the interchange fees. They said it is not their job. They are just the government; there is nothing to see here. They are just the Department of Finance and the Minister of Finance; they are not concerned with competition.

That is the reason we have an oligopolistic economy. We have a Minister of Finance, a Liberal government and a Department of Finance that do not care about the fact that we have an oligopolistic cellphone industry. We have a government that does not care about the fact that we have monopolies in banking, telecommunications and airlines.

The extent to which the government members protect their corporate buddies is incredible.

• (1330)

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

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

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

That, in accordance with subsection 4.1(1) of the Lobbying Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. 44 (4th Supplement), and pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the reappointment of Nancy Bélanger as Commissioner of Lobbying, for a term of seven years.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, second, I move:

That, in accordance with subsection 54(1) of the Access to Information Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. A-1, and pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the reappointment of Caroline Maynard as Information Commissioner, for a term of seven years.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

FALUN GONG

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, Sun Qian has been imprisoned by the People's Republic of China. She is a practitioner of Falun Gong, which is the traditional Chinese spiritual discipline of meditation, exercise and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

Tens of thousands of such practitioners have been imprisoned, and Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting has sponsored and been behind the petition of 1.5 million folks in 50 countries bringing this to the attention of their governments.

Petitioners are looking for a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systemically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting and publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

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

The first petition is from petitioners who believe that regardless of circumstances, it is always wrong to kill a child. They are, as a result, deeply concerned by some of the discourse that has happened in this place, particularly proposals around the expansion of euthanasia to include babies from birth to one year of age. This proposal was made by a representative of the Quebec college of physicians, and this proposal for the legalized killing of infants, as a further expansion to Canada's already extremely liberal euthanasia regime, is certainly a further source of concern for these petitioners. They call on the government and the House to oppose this radical proposal to legalize the killing of small children in this country.

• (1335)

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is in support of Bill C-257. It is a private member's bill that stands in my name that would add political belief or activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

This bill would protect Canadians from discrimination on the basis of their political views. Currently, while Canadians are protected in the federal jurisdiction from discrimination on the basis of many different criteria, there is no protection against discrimination on the basis of political views. This lack of protection can have a chilling effect when people maybe limit their public comments on issues that are important to them for fear they might face professional or other forms of discrimination or retaliation.

Petitioners call on the House to support Bill C-257, which would protect Canadians from political discrimination.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition deals with the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. Petitioners highlight the history of the terrible persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the People's Republic of China by the Chinese Communist Party. They call on the House to take additional and stronger steps to try to combat the scourge of persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.

ERITREA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, next I would like to table a petition regarding the human rights situation in Eritrea, as well as implications for foreign interference here in Canada. Petitioners observe that Eritrea has been ruled by an authoritarian, brutal dictator under a totalitarian system for the last 30 years with no constitution, no elections, no parliament, no freedom of the press, and no freedom of movement and association. It has been called the North Korea of Africa. Many

Privilege

Eritreans have been forced to flee and have sought asylum in various places. There is now a large, very productive and well-respected Eritrean community here in Canada.

The Eritrean community in Canada continues to be concerned about the long arm of the oppressive Eritrean government and threats of foreign interference that affect even people living in Canada. Petitioners therefore call on the House and the government to strengthen engagement with Eritrean political and human rights activists and pro-democracy groups, to take a stronger role opposing the Eritrean government's human rights abuses and support for Russia's neocolonial agenda in Africa. Petitioners also want to see additional steps to ensure that agents of the Eritrean government are not able to come to Canada and engage in political interference here.

Petitioners are also calling for the release of a number of political prisoners in Eritrea, including Swedish Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak and 11 imprisoned Eritrean parliamentarians. They are also calling for strengthened sanctions against human rights abusers in Eritrea.

* * *

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.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from November 6 consideration of the motion, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Leila Dance (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I feel honoured to rise today in the House of Commons to make my first speech as the member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona.

No one would have imagined just a few short months ago that I would be here today addressing the House. I grew up in a very community-minded household. My parents were both active volunteers in my community and valuable members of society. I was raised with those values and beliefs, and understand the importance of supporting and giving back to my community.

Privilege

I have lived my whole life in the great Elmwood—Transcona riding. I had the chance to buy my first house in this community. I raised my son in the neighbourhood I grew up in. I supported and volunteered in local community organizations, and raised funds to support youth programs my son attended. I spent 16 years working for important non-profit organizations that were dedicated to helping people, including the ALS Society of Manitoba, the Kidney Foundation and the Children's Wish Foundation, which is now known as Make-A-Wish. I also worked for a local community centre.

Like many Canadians, I had two jobs to support my family. For the last four years, I worked as the executive director for the local business improvement zone, helping small and medium-sized businesses navigate a global pandemic while supporting and connecting with local social services groups. Social services groups are the backbone of community. They provide services to our neighbours where the government has fallen short. We are talking about local food banks, veterans services, youth programs and so much more.

I recognize that my experience brings a unique perspective in my new role. There are many community members who have dedicated their time and energy to making things happen in my neighbourhood, and I am just one of them. I do, however, understand, with every fibre of my being, the struggles and preoccupations my constituents face every day. I promised them that as the new member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona, I will continue to advocate for my community and every member in it.

As for today's topic, the question of privilege, we have been debating this since I arrived over a month ago. Nothing in the government has moved forward, and we are wasting Canadians' time and money. For months, I knocked on doors, I visited community members, and I listened to their concerns. Over and over, the same things came up, including the exasperating cost of groceries. People in my riding have been forced to choose between groceries and their prescriptions. A few short years ago, Canadians could get a full cart of groceries for \$100, and now they are lucky if they walk away with two small bags. Families need relief. We need action from the government now.

My local food banks, like many across the country, are seeing a record number of people accessing them. In some cases, these are families who have two incomes, people who have never accessed food banks before. I even know of one woman who just last year donated to the food bank and this year is accessing it. Again, families need relief. We need to see action today.

Constituents spoke a lot about the lack of affordable housing. Every month in Winnipeg, there are fewer affordable places for people to live. The cost of rent goes up, and there is no increase in income. Although I appreciate the government's push for more housing, I wonder what percentage will actually be affordable housing. We do not need more \$800,000 homes. In my riding, we need homes that families can afford, and \$800,000 homes are not it.

I was fortunate enough, as a single mom, to be able to buy my first home at 24. I was able to provide a home for my son, so he had a place to call his own. Now as my son enters adulthood and has a good trades job, he cannot see that possibility in this economy. We need to stop greedy landlords. We need to ensure builders are re-

quired to build more affordable homes in our communities, homes that the next generation can afford to raise their families in.

Rounding out the top three issues is the current state of the health care system in the riding and across the country. Manitobans are currently looking at a backlog of over 40,000 surgeries. We are also known across the country for having the longest wait times in our emergency rooms. What is the government doing to help Canadians access the health care they need and deserve? Manitobans saw the cutting and gutting of our health care system under the previous provincial Conservative government, which cut 3,500 health care workers and closed a very important emergency room in my riding.

● (1340)

Our current NDP government in Manitoba is working extra hard to try to reopen those spaces, hire back those qualified staff and manage the backlog, but we need to remember that the quick cuts to save a buck today will have long-lasting effects on our country. We need to stop filibustering. We need to be making things happen for Canadians.

The reason I agreed to run in the by-election was to continue the amazing work for which the NDP has worked so hard. Voters know that the New Democrats dragged the Liberal government to the table to get things done. We forced it to deliver on valuable things that the families of Elmwood—Transcona need, things like the national dental care program for seniors and children. We saw this time and again, and yet it is a flawed program under the Liberal government.

We also saw free birth control being provided to over nine million Canadians and diabetes medications for over four million Canadians, yet there are still many drugs that the Liberals could add to the pharmacare program to help Canadians. The New Democrats want to see a head-to-toe health care system that can help everyone in every way.

We have seen the creation of a national program to provide meals for children in schools so that they can focus and learn, and to give parents a break, yet the Liberals are still falling short, as many schools in Manitoba, which started months ago, still are not seeing meals being served. We need to invest more. We need to continue to do things like this.

The New Democrats are dedicated to helping improve the lives of Canadian families and the Liberal government is still falling short. We need to do more.

In my community, we know the cost of the Conservatives. Manitoba saw the cost to social services and community groups when they were cut. We saw the cutting and gutting of our health care system. We saw the short-sighted cuts and we saw how it affected us daily. We need to continue to fight for Canadians because they continue to struggle. Our youth continue to struggle. Our seniors continue to struggle. We need to stop with the pathetic slogans and the runaround answers. We need to deliver more for Canadians.

I am also keenly aware that I am following in the heels of a great NDP MP. In every corner of Elmwood—Transcona, Winnipeggers still speak fondly of the late great Bill Blaikie. It is not in my speech, but I am going to tell members that he honoured my dad on April 16, 2008, in the House of Commons after he passed away. I will fondly remember him for that.

Mr. Blaikie was and will continue to be an inspiration to many. His exemplary legacy casts a long shadow on those who follow. I endeavour to work as hard and as effectively as he did.

I would also be remiss if I did not pay tribute to another great Blaikie, my predecessor Daniel Blaikie, who was as worthy a successor as his father. He was a brilliant, articulate and effective member for Elmwood—Transcona. I thank him for his service in this chamber

Taking my place in the chamber is a true honour, an honour I do not take for granted. I would like to thank the volunteers and voters for getting me here. I look forward to many other opportunities where I can bring a voice to my constituents in this chamber.

I conclude my speech with a simple promise. I will always work as hard as I can to advocate on behalf of my constituents, and I thank my colleagues for accommodating me today.

• (1345)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely congratulate my colleague on her maiden speech in this chamber, and I welcome her. Any strong woman who serves in this place is an addition for all of us. I also echo the concerns she has brought forward in this chamber. I look forward to working with her.

I also want to congratulate her predecessor, Daniel Blaikie. We certainly miss him. He was a giant in this place. I know he is doing very well in his new role in Manitoba.

I just had those congratulatory comments. I appreciate the member's work today.

Ms. Leila Dance: Madam Speaker, I learned during my campaign that women represent only 30% of parliamentarians, so I feel privileged to be here as one of the 30%.

• (1350)

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to offer my sincere congratulations to our newest member for Elmwood—Transcona. While I was knocking on doors as the common-sense Conservative candidate, we met on the street, and I really appreciate the campaign she ran. It was not that long ago that I experienced the same range of emotions. I thought she gave a great first speech.

Privilege

The member mentioned a few things, such as housing prices, the food prices and the quality of our health care. When you were on people's doorsteps, did you hear any concerns about the rising cost of living due to inflation through overspending, the fact that we transfer less to the provinces for health care than we do to pay off the interest on our debt, and, of course, the proposed quadrupling of the carbon tax?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that when they interact, they need to go through the Speaker and not directly to members individually.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Ms. Leila Dance: Madam Speaker, what I heard on the doorsteps was more about groceries and the cost of finding an apartment that people could afford. People are struggling day to day. Every single dollar, no matter how they get it, is really important to them. We talked quite a bit about different ways that this could happen. I continue to hear this over and over again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, as the status of women critic, I want to draw attention to the presence of one more woman in the House at a time when people are worried about about not maintaining women's 30% share in the next election.

My feminist parliamentary group colleagues and I signed a letter calling for greater civility in the House. We must set an example. The current climate of highly polarized debates and political filibustering does not motivate women to get into politics. I therefore invite my colleague to keep working hard on this.

I do not know how we are going to change the atmosphere in the House. We need to restore civility so we can avoid losing more women and perhaps even gain more women in the next election.

[*English*]

Ms. Leila Dance: Madam Speaker, as a woman, I feel very passionate about the fact that I am one of the 30% here. On the campaign trail, I had the opportunity to meet with young girls, teenagers, even girls in their early 20s who wondered what it would be like to join politics in this climate.

I did not decide to become a politician until I was 46, so I do not know if I would have had the strength to stand here the same way at 20 years of age with the atmosphere here some days. I can really appreciate that.

We all have to work together and be nicer to each other in general.

Statements by Members

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Elmwood—Transcona on her very heartfelt, passionate and effective speech. I saw her first-hand on the doorsteps in Elmwood—Transcona. I had the privilege of door knocking with her. I saw how people reacted to her and how impressed they were with the fact that she was knocking on thousands and thousands of doors talking to people about their concerns.

The member mentioned some of the issues, like dental care and pharmacare, where the NDP has made a difference. Thousands of people in Elmwood—Transcona have already had access to dental care, and pharmacare is coming soon. The Manitoba government is obviously stepping up. That will mean \$1,500 a month for people with diabetes. They will no longer have to pay for their medication and devices. She also mentioned the anti-scab legislation.

The member talked about food and gas price gouging and the fact that so many people were looking for affordable housing. We know that the Manitoba government is doing its part. Should the federal government be stepping up on all these issues beyond what the NDP has forced it to do so that people have a roof over their head, are able to put food on the table and can go to the grocery store without being gouged by the food giants?

● (1355)

Ms. Leila Dance: Madam Speaker, yes, I think Canadians want action now and they want things that will impact their bottom line and their pocketbook today, not tomorrow, not in 2025, not in the future. They need to be things that will impact them today and their ability to save money and to do the things they need to do, whether it be supporting their family by having a pantry full of groceries or putting a roof over their heads, something that many of us in this room would take for granted. We need to come together and figure out a way to move forward to help Canadians.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to offer my sincere congratulations to the member for her maiden speech and for being elected in Elmwood—Transcona.

When I was first elected, one of the very first speeches I gave in this chamber was about a conflict of interest report on a Liberal member. Today, this member got to give her speech on the topic of the day, which is on government corruption and scandal. We see people who are taking taxpayer money to further their own personal interests. She spoke very well about the issues that people are going through in her own riding.

I wonder if she could talk about how unfortunate it is that for her maiden speech, we are talking about government corruption and scandal rather than ways we could be furthering the country, much like I did when I gave my first speech in the House.

Ms. Leila Dance: Madam Speaker, I want to be a strong voice for Canadians and the people in my riding of Elmwood—Transcona. As much as I have enjoyed being here, we need to move forward. We need to get back to government work and make things happen. I will keep repeating that over and over again. We need to make things happen for Canadians, because they are desperate to have stuff happen, where they can see an actual impact.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have now known the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for a few weeks and have come to really appreciate her as a very genuine, caring member of Parliament. I know that her constituents will truly appreciate that going forward.

She and I spoke about her being on the campaign trail and I would love to hear comment further on it. She visited some folks who were on the picket lines and she spoke about what it meant for her to be there with them. There are people in this place who are fighting for their collective bargaining rights, and that is a big part of her community. What did she hear directly from them?

Ms. Leila Dance: Madam Speaker, I did have the chance to walk the line with Teamsters during the campaign, which is near and dear to my heart. My dad was from the same union. My brother is now in the same union, so I had the chance to walk with my brother. In 2008, I walked the line with my son and my dad. It was great to walk with those workers, to hear their stories and concerns about safety issues and those types of things, which they have to think about day in and day out, and the ability to come home safe to their families.

Over the weekend, I had a chance to walk with the Canada Post workers in my riding who have the potential of going on strike. That is very near and dear to my heart. I want to continue to fight for workers across Canada and, most specifically, in my riding of Elmwood—Transcona.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

MICHAEL ROBERT ELLCHOOK

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to recognize and honour the life of a good Canadian, Michael Robert Ellchhook, who everybody knew simply as “Hoss”. Like the *Bonanza* character, Hoss was a gentle giant of a man. A good Ukrainian boy, he grew up on a farm in Murillo. Hoss loved cooking. He worked as a chef in Europe and various places in Canada before returning home to open up his own restaurant.

Hoss was a volunteer in a wide variety of community activities, none more important than his role as a volunteer firefighter with the Oliver Paipoonge Fire and First Response. That is where I first met him years ago when he brought someone into the emergency room while performing CPR on them. That was Hoss, always helping others. That is why he was such a beloved member of the community and why he will be missed by so many people from Murillo, Kakabeka and Thunder Bay. Most of all he will be missed by his loving family, his mother Betty, his sister Jeanne and his brother Dennis.

Thanks, Hoss.

* * *

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month and this week my wife Cailey and I met with Breakthrough T1D, formerly known as JDRF Canada, to discuss the challenges of living with type 1 diabetes. T1D is a chronic autoimmune disease that prevents the body from producing insulin. Cailey was diagnosed just after her first birthday. Over the years we have witnessed remarkable advancements in treatment. In our meeting, two youth advocates, Sophia and Bennett, shared the daily struggles of managing blood sugar and what a cure would mean for them. They also spoke about promising research under way, including cell therapy, a treatment that could offer insulin independence by replacing damaged cells.

Canada's own Frederick Banting and Charles Best revolutionized care for T1D by discovering insulin, saving millions of lives. Today, Canadian researchers are on the verge of another breakthrough, one that could change the future for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who currently live with T1D. Insulin was discovered here in Canada, and I have no doubt that our brightest minds will continue to lead the way toward finding a cure. Thankfully, the future is hopeful for all those affected by type 1 diabetes.

* * *

PREMIER OF NEW BRUNSWICK

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember the first time I visited the office of the premier of New Brunswick. I was met with a wall of framed portraits, not dissimilar to this House, where all the faces represented were men. Times have changed and a glass ceiling has been shattered. It is a privilege to congratulate New Brunswick's first woman premier, Susan Holt, and the Liberal Party of New Brunswick on their recent victory in the provincial election. This historic milestone is not only a significant personal achievement for Premier Holt, but a monumental step forward for all New Brunswickers, and indeed all women and girls in our province.

Premier Holt's new role changes the game in so many ways. Not only is she determined and hopeful for our future, but her hard work and passion for her province and community inspire us all. This is a collaborative moment that everyone in our province can bask in and be a part of, something truly unforgettable. As a determined leader and a fantastic mother, she understands the struggles and needs of families across the province.

I want to thank all who were involved in this transformational moment, as well as Premier Holt and her family, for stepping up when we needed them most. It is a new dawn in New Brunswick.

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[Translation]

VETERANS' WEEK

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is Veterans' Week. After paying tribute last week to veterans who served in both world wars and the Korean War, today I want to

Statements by Members

pay tribute to our modern-day veterans, who are too often overlooked.

These women and men have overcome harrowing ordeals on the battlefield, during peacekeeping missions and community action or while responding to natural disasters. Their service extends far beyond conflict zones. They have also made vital contributions to the safety and well-being of communities almost everywhere in the world.

They have sacrificed their comfort, health, and precious moments in their personal lives to defend the values of peace and protect the freedom that we cherish. Now, it is our turn to look out for them by ensuring they receive proper health care and the support they need to rejoin the workforce.

I want to thank them, heroes one and all, for their service.

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[English]

CHINESE RAILROAD WORKERS

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, on November 7, we remember and honour the sacrifices of Chinese railroad workers who, against extraordinary hardship, helped to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. This railway was essential to Canada's Confederation, ensuring British Columbia's entry and connecting our nation from coast to coast. This date marks the completion of the railway in 1885, a feat that would have been impossible without the efforts of over 17,000 Chinese workers who faced gruelling conditions, low wages and unfair treatment, risking and giving their lives to bring this national vision to life. Their contributions, often overlooked, are a cornerstone of our shared history.

Already proclaimed by the cities of Toronto, Edmonton and Ottawa, we commit to ensuring that this day will be officially recognized as the Chinese railroad workers memorial day across Canada, preserving their legacy in our national memory.

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● (1405)

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the green fund scandal just keeps getting worse. Yesterday, the Journal de Montréal reported that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change holds an interest in a Montreal investment firm that received money from the green fund.

Statements by Members

Between 2020 and 2021, \$10.4 million in federal money was paid to four companies in which the minister has personal interests. The more we look, the more links we are finding between the green fund and Liberal cronies. This, however, takes it to the next level. These funds went directly to firms in which the minister has financial interests. This scandal proves that the Liberals came up with a scheme to make money for themselves instead of fighting climate change, which is what the green fund was supposed to do.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast are disillusioned with this Liberal government and want an election as soon as possible to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

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[English]

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF YUKON

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, courage, solidarity, giving and hope are the values that members of the Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon, UCAY, are showing as they embark on a heroic journey to deliver medical supplies to the front line of Ukraine's fight against Putin's ruthless and illegal invasion. Four dedicated individuals, Grant Zazula, Lesia Hnatiw, Anastasia Matlashevskaya and Eileen Melnychuk, will carry over 20 suitcases to Ukraine filled with everything from antibiotics to first aid supplies to warm socks.

I thank each Yukoner who has contributed as well as all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to gather resources and support for this mission. I thank UCAY for standing with Ukraine during these challenging times. Indeed, it is incumbent on all of us to act against the dark forces that threaten democracy and work together towards the peace that the world so desperately needs.

I wish safe travels and success to the team. May their journey bring hope and healing to those who need it most.

Slava Ukraini.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Winnipeg South, I am proud to represent a large and growing Indo-Canadian community where Sikh and Hindu families live side by side in harmony as neighbours. Unfortunately, there are those who seek to promote extreme views, create division and sow discord.

Let me be clear, there should never be disruptive protests at places of worship, like we saw recently in Brampton and Vancouver. The defacing of Hindu temples, as we have regrettably seen at the BAPS mandirs in Toronto and Edmonton, is absolutely unacceptable. As well, inflammatory statements and incidents of grave violence targeting Sikh Canadians have no place in our country. Acts of hate and the creation of disharmony do not reflect the Canada we know and love, which is a multicultural mosaic that is the envy of the world.

In Winnipeg South and beyond, let us work hard to foster unity, keep community members safe, live together in peace and build a better Canada for all.

CONSULATE GENERAL OF CANADA IN NEW YORK

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, love it or list it. When the Prime Minister's old media buddy, Tom Clark, got to New York, he was disgusted with the 2,700-square-foot, cramped penthouse condo on Park Avenue with only 12 rooms and five bedrooms. Tom took one look at the dump and called his friend, the Prime Minister, and demanded that this property be listed.

What is on Tom Clark's must-have list for his New York penthouse condo? Well, Italian marble, of course, a handcrafted copper soaker tub, a \$5,000 coffee machine and, yes, even a golf simulator.

I am sure that the Prime Minister's media buddy, Tom Clark, loves his new \$9-million penthouse condo. However, if we ask anyone who is living in the 1,400 homeless tent encampments in Toronto or the millions of Canadians who cannot afford a home, they say: List it.

* * *

● (1410)

VETERANS' WEEK

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Veterans' Week, I want to thank all those who have served and all those who continue to serve in the defence of our country.

Two weeks ago, we marked 10 years since Corporal Nathan Cirillo was senselessly gunned down while on sentry duty in Ottawa at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. That morning, I walked over to the War Memorial to pay my respects to this brave Hamiltonian, a class-A reservist of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. I was flooded with memories from the day he died when I spoke with many Hamiltonians in my capacity as a journalist, and the anguish was intense across the city.

When I arrived at the memorial, I found myself amid a throng of Argylls from Hamilton here in Ottawa to continue their duty. Some of them had been close to Corporal Cirillo and knew him well. Again, we were overcome with emotion. Hamilton will never forget.

I want to thank the Argylls for their ongoing service to our country, and I look forward to seeing them again on Sunday for the Garri-son Parade.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine long years of these NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The Prime Minister has taken his anti-energy crusade to a whole new level after recently announcing his oil and gas production cut. This job-killing policy will result in sending jobs to the United States along with \$700 million that will go to build pipelines in America. The NDP-Liberals are creating more powerful paycheques. Unfortunately, they are for U.S. oil workers, steelworkers and truck drivers. The government's own analysis admits that its cap on production will cost thousands of jobs and billions of dollars, destroying Canadian paycheques.

Here at home, Canadian workers are getting poorer and cannot afford to put food on the table or a roof over their heads. The NDP-Liberals have no plan for the environment and their cap on production will only perpetuate the economic vandalism they have caused. It is time for a carbon tax election now.

* * *

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents have told me in no uncertain terms that they want a carbon tax election. There is only one person left who prevents that by keeping this Prime Minister in power, and that person is the leader of the NDP. That is the same leader of the NDP who made a big stunt when he told Canadians he had ripped up his coalition deal with the Liberals. It was a perfectly timed scam on the voters in Elmwood—Transcona, right before a by-election.

The leader of the NDP even went so far as to say, “The fact is, the Liberals are too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people”. If the Liberals are so weak, why has the leader of the NDP voted for the carbon tax over 24 times? Why does he support his inflationary deficits, including wasteful spending like the Prime Minister's arrive scam app? Why does the leader of the NDP support the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies that have led to a 50% increase in violent crime?

Every day this Prime Minister remains in power is because of the leader of the NDP. It is time for the leader of the NDP to stand with Canadians instead of the Liberal government. Call a carbon tax election.

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VETERANS' WEEK

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, veterans often see music as a profound way to express themselves and heal from the impacts of military service. That is why, last year, Veterans Affairs Canada hosted its first-ever Veterans' Open Mic night. This event brought together veterans, family members, active service members and music lovers. It was so successful that the idea expanded, with events happening across the country, including in Victoria, in Montreal later this weekend and right here in Ottawa tonight.

Statements by Members

I invite all members of this House to join with us tonight at the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess to celebrate the healing power of music.

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LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, November is Lebanese Heritage Month, and I am fortunate to work with many Londoners of Lebanese heritage who make our city better. To name only a few, there are Mike Ramal, a small business owner in London South; Sergeant Ziyad Zabian from the London Police Service; Majidah Zabian, a leader from Cedars of Hope; Dr. Munir El Kassem, our local imam; Dr. Majed Fiaani, physician in internal medicine; and Nadine Abi Raad, who works in my office and fights for my constituents every single day. I am so grateful to them all.

I have witnessed that Lebanese Canadians always seem to find each other. They share a solidarity that has been built through hardship and war, and they continue to show remarkable resilience and the truest pride in being Lebanese.

The Lebanese community is hurting. I see the pain in their eyes every day, and I see the worry about friends and family. I want them to know that I stand with them. We must never stop demanding a ceasefire for an arms embargo and peace in the region. While this may hold cold comfort to so many at this time, I hope that they will be able to celebrate this Lebanese Heritage Month.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we stand in solidarity with American women, let us not forget the Iranian women who are fighting for their rights.

Let us keep in our thoughts Ahou Daryaei, the new heroine of the resistance. When confronted by the morality police about wearing a veil, she shed her clothing in front of the misogynistic authorities with dignity, pride and courage before she was arrested. Her fate remains unknown, and our thoughts are with her.

Let us also keep in our thoughts 16-year-old Arezoo Khavari, who took her life after being harassed for dancing without a hijab.

Two years after the death of Mahsa Amini, the Woman, Life, Freedom movement is still going strong despite violent suppression. These women deserve our support in their fight against Islamism, in their fight for freedom.

Oral Questions

We need to learn the value of this freedom from religious militancy that we too often take for granted here at home. Let us stand in strong solidarity. Today, more than ever: woman, life, freedom.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals, well-connected government elite insiders have been pretending to be indigenous in order to take contracts intended for indigenous people, but until today, we did not know just how high the rot went.

Today, the Liberals' indigenous contracting scandal just got a bit "randier", with revelations that the company owned by the Liberal minister from Edmonton Centre tried to identify itself as indigenous in order to get government contracts. Recall that when text messages came out about someone named Randy directing the affairs of the company in violation of ethics laws, the minister's partner claimed it was someone else named Randy. He later admitted that was false, but said the references to Randy were the result of autocorrect. In order to help get government contracts, they invented another Randy and pretended he was indigenous.

Here is the bottom line. Indigenous people in Canada have tragically high levels of poverty. This privileged, elite minister's fraudulent company tried to grab contracts that the government promised to indigenous people by pretending to be indigenous. It has never been more clear that the minister and the Liberals are only in it for themselves.

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LEONARD WILLIAM ELLIOTT

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we pause this week to honour the brave men and women who have served our country, I would like to pay tribute to Private Leonard William Elliott, a Canadian infantry soldier who fought in the First World War.

Private Elliott was one of the more than 650,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders who courageously answered the call to defend the values of freedom and peace in the war that was meant to end all wars, and one of the more than 66,000 who never came home. He was also my great-grandfather.

Leonard was killed in action in August 1917 in the Battle of Hill 70, leaving behind a wife and five children, among them the six-month-old daughter he would never meet, my grandmother Edith. Like so many others, he left his home and family, stepping into the unknown to protect a future he would never see. He fought not just for his generation but for every generation to come.

I had the honour of visiting my great-grandfather's grave in northern France in 2017. I was the first family member to do so, 100 years after his death. The solemn promise I made that day was to ensure that his memory and legacy would live on. Lest we forget.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of brutal assaults on Canadian energy workers, the Prime Minister just delivered a knockout punch with a production cap on oil and gas development, which his own department admits will kill jobs and drive investment south of the border.

Canadian energy company Enbridge just announced a \$700-million project in the U.S. The Prime Minister is creating powerful paycheques for American workers while Canadian workers cannot afford their mortgages or food. It is completely baffling why he would kill jobs here just to see them created down south. Is he getting some kind of commission from the U.S. energy lobby for all the business he is sending it?

● (1420)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is saying is simply not true. It is a cap on pollution. In fact, production is going to go up 16% by 2030, and companies in Alberta in the oil sands sectors are making a billion-dollar investment to make sure workers in Alberta have a future and the energy sector has a future. We can fight climate change at the same time.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a cap on production and his own department says it will kill jobs.

Let us listen to something else the Liberals' own officials are saying. The Prime Minister's own environment commissioner has blasted the carbon tax as a failure. Here are some of his conclusions: The government has "not made sufficient progress to reduce greenhouse gas emissions" and "Canada remains the worst performer among all member countries of the G7".

Every time the Prime Minister makes the carbon tax go up, Canada's climate performance goes down, yet he keeps doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result. Why will he not call a carbon tax election so Conservatives can stop his insanity?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada is talking about climate change. We should note this somewhere in a book because it does not happen very often. If only the Conservatives would talk about the fact that for 10 years, they did nothing, which is why we had to pick up the slack. When we came to power, emissions were going to overshoot by more than 30% by 2030.

Emissions are down by 8% because of our plan. We have the lowest emissions in 25 years, no thanks to the Conservative Party.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he said pick up the slack. Under the Liberals' policies, Canada keeps falling on performance indexes. The only thing the carbon tax is doing is making Canadians poorer, and the results are devastating.

A damning new report from the Salvation Army shows the human suffering the Prime Minister is inflicting on Canadians. The report says that first-time users of food banks shot up this year from 43% to 58%, and one in four parents is eating less so their children can eat. This is in Canada. How can he be so cold-hearted?

Why will he not at least let Canadians decide in a carbon tax election?

[Translation]

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, who here has an inferiority complex? It is the Conservative Party.

Honestly, inflation in Canada is at 1.6%, the lowest it has been in the last four months, and interest rates are coming down. On this side of the House, not only do we help Canadians when they need it, but we also build housing and hand out the family allowance. The only party in the House that has an inferiority complex when it comes to Canada's economic resilience is the Conservative Party.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister, supported by the Bloc Québécois, we find out today in the report from the commissioner of the environment that the Liberals' greenhouse gas reduction numbers are not reliable.

In fact, this Prime Minister's environmental policy has contributed more to doubling the cost of food and housing than to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Liberals are misleading Canadians and are on track to miss every one of their environmental targets.

When will the Prime Minister call an election so that we can lower taxes?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have to mark our calendars. The Conservative Party is talking about the issue of climate change. If only it was to remind us that they did nothing for 10 years: no measures on energy efficiency, no measures for the electrification of transportation and no measures for renewable energy.

We know that Canada's record under the Conservatives was far from stellar.

From 2019 to 2021, Canada had the best record of all the G7 countries on greenhouse gas reduction. It was certainly not thanks to the Conservative Party, that has no plan for the environment, no plan for protecting the public and no plan for security.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister should read the report. The commissioner of the environment and sustainable development has been clear: the recent drop in emissions is not a result of governments' climate measures.

The Liberal environmental policy, supported by the Bloc Québécois, is not a plan to fight climate change. It is a plan to tax Canadians that has doubled the cost of housing and groceries. The truth came out this morning. Liberal Canada has the worst record in the G7 when it comes to reducing emissions.

When will the Liberals stop punishing Canadians and call an election so that we can finally lower taxes?

• (1425)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is rather unbelievable that the Conservative Party still has its head in the sand when it comes to climate change.

For July and August alone, the insurable cost of the impact of climate change for Canadians was \$7 billion. That is a record. It is unprecedented. What is the Conservative Party saying? It is saying that it will let the planet burn. The Conservatives do not have a plan to fight climate change. They do not have a plan to create jobs in the 21st-century economy, which will be a green economy. They do not have a plan to protect Canadians, to have clean water and clean air for all Canadians.

That is a real disgrace.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Before I go to the hon. member for La Prairie, I would like to remind the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake not to speak unless he is recognized by the Chair.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the thing farmers were afraid of happened in the Senate.

Oral Questions

Senator Peter Harder introduced an amendment to Bill C-282 that prevents it from protecting supply management. Mr. Harder's amendment invalidates the bill as far as future renegotiations of existing agreements are concerned. In other words, the Senate is giving Donald Trump carte blanche to attack supply management during the next round of CUSMA talks in 2026.

Peter Harder and Peter Boehm are not working for farmers; they are working for Donald Trump.

Will the leader of the government ask senators to defeat this toxic amendment?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the Bloc Québécois. Bill C-282, which protects supply management, is important. I am disappointed in the committee of senators who voted against this bill and made this amendment.

I would ask senators to respect the will of the House. I am asking all senators to vote against this amendment and support our farmers, who feed Canadians and contribute so much to our economy.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, senators Peter Harder and Peter Boehm confirm that the one thing they have wanted from the start is to kill Bill C-282. Their amendment practically guarantees that supply management will be sacrificed again during the renegotiation of CUSMA with Donald Trump. They are attacking the votes of every party in the House. They are attacking 6,000 Quebec companies. They are attacking 100,000 Quebec workers. They are attacking our regions. They are ruining our producers and weakening our agricultural model.

I am addressing the government House leader, but this goes for all the parties here.

Is she going to ask senators to vote against this outright sabotage?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have indeed asked senators to support this bill in its original form. It is important to support supply management. It is important to protect it. This is a commitment that the Liberal Party and the Liberal government have made.

We created the supply management system, and we are going to continue to protect it.

I would like to know whether the Leader of the Opposition is going to encourage Conservative senators to vote for the bill in its original form.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's environmental performance is pathetic.

We are in a climate crisis, and the Liberals are not getting the job done. First of all, the minister announced regulations on the emissions cap for the oil and gas sector, supposedly to meet our 2030 targets, but they will not even apply until 2030. Today, the environ-

ment commissioner confirmed that the Liberal plan is not working. Canada ranks last in the G7.

Will the minister finally do his job, or is he going to climb the CN Tower again?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to read the report from the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, which indicates that our measures are working in Canada. We have the best performance of all G7 countries from 2019 to 2021.

It is true that not much progress was made in the fight against climate change under the Conservatives. Since we took office, we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 41% compared to what they would have been.

This is the first time in Canadian history that greenhouse gas emissions are falling while the economy is operating at full capacity. That is thanks to our plan.

• (1430)

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better than that excuse. There is another climate report and another massive Liberal failure. Canadians are terrified of the impacts of the climate crisis. They need action.

Today's report has given the Liberals a failing grade. We have the worst climate record in the G7, while the government caves to the biggest and richest polluters. The Conservatives will always put the interests of the rich before the planet.

When are the Liberals going to stop putting oil and gas CEOs ahead of Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the key measures of our climate change plan is putting a price on pollution.

On May 8, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said, "This is why, as New Democrats, as progressives, as environmentalists, we are in favour of putting a price on pollution." I guess that, under the pressure from the Conservative Party of Canada, the New Democrats are no longer progressives and are no longer environmentalists.

On this side of the House, we will continue to fight against climate change. We will continue to fight for Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government's own data revealed that oil and gas is the only sector of the economy showing signs of life. On Monday, the NDP-Liberals announced a job-killing cap on oil and gas production.

Oral Questions

The government's own analysis admits that its cap on production will cost thousands of jobs and billions of dollars, destroying Canadian paycheques. It is no wonder Canadian-based Enbridge is building a \$700-million pipeline in the United States.

The Prime Minister is creating powerful paycheques for American energy workers and American steel workers, while Canadian workers cannot afford their food or rent.

Why is the Prime Minister driving investment jobs away from Canada and toward the United States?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying is simply false. It is a cap on pollution. Pollution is a bad thing, which is something the Conservative Party of Canada should understand.

Does the member want to talk about investment? Let us talk about the \$2-billion investment that Strathcona, an oil company in Alberta, is making in Canada to make sure that workers in Alberta and the energy sector can have a future in a carbon-constrained world, something the Conservative Party of Canada is incapable of understanding.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: When the Speaker stands up and the House is quieting, that, especially, is not the time to interfere. I will ask the hon. member for Edmonton Manning to please allow the responses to be given.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot has the floor.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister may not understand how the energy industry works, but Canadians do. Regardless of the name, the cap is going to drive investment out of Canada, costing Canadians their jobs.

It has been nine long years of a Liberal government bent on destroying the Canadian energy sector, despite the industry's being the biggest driver of the Canadian economy and employing hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers.

I will ask the question again: Why are the extremist minister and the Prime Minister helping Donald Trump create American jobs?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, foreign direct investment is up in Canada. Investors are coming to Canada because we provide stability. We provide opportunity.

Canada has a long-standing history of standing up for and protecting Canadian workers. With respect to the last NAFTA negotiations, it was the Conservative Party of Canada that asked us to back down. We did not. We stood up for steelworkers. We stood up for our auto workers. We stood up for our agricultural workers and our farmers, and we will do it again.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost as they continue to crush the Canadian energy sector. This week, they announced their job-killing oil and gas production cap. Enbridge, a company based in Calgary, is taking its \$700-million investment out of Canada to build a pipeline in America. That is jobs

and powerful paycheques for American pipeline workers, for American engineers and for American truckers.

Why is the Prime Minister so focused on creating powerful paycheques for Americans and not for Canadians?

• (1435)

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, we consult experts who disagree with the member, but recently the Conservatives' go-to guy, Sylvain Charlebois, said that climate change is the agri-food sector's greatest challenge and agreed that climate change is a major driver of food price inflation, so if Conservatives actually cared about elevated food prices, they would have a plan to address climate change, but they do not.

They have nothing: no plan to address the biggest challenge in the agri-food sector and no plan to address the biggest driver of food price inflation. Now are they going to start attacking this expert too?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Liberals to get back to the real world where Canadians are struggling to eat, heat their home and house themselves.

While the minister tries to claim that the production cap is going to create thousands of jobs, his own department is saying that it is going to cost the Canadian economy billions of dollars and that we are going to lose thousands of jobs.

The Canadian oil and gas industry already provides powerful paycheques for our people, so why is the Prime Minister so hell-bent on destroying those powerful paycheques and giving them to Americans?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we love powerful paycheques. Actually, wages have outpaced inflation in Canada for the last 20 months.

The member opposite wants to talk about the United States. I have some information for him. Last week, the economist David Rosenberg said, "US-based investors should strongly consider moving from New York to Toronto". I am not a Leafs fan, but I happen to agree with that economist, and I know that investors right around the world are looking to Canada.

Oral Questions

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost. The government's own analysis admits that its cap on production will cost Canadians thousands of jobs and billions of dollars. Meanwhile, a Canadian company that cannot get a pipeline approved in Canada is investing \$700 million in a U.S. project, and in 2023, the Liberals increased oil and gas imports to Canada, with over 40 million barrels shipped across the Atlantic from Nigeria and Saudi Arabia alone.

Why is the Prime Minister so intent on funding powerful paycheques in the U.S. and everywhere else, while Canadians struggle to afford food and housing?

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, I know that Conservatives like to cherry-pick per capita measures to try to talk down the Canadian economy, but in fact if we look at per capita foreign direct investment, Canada is number one in the world, ahead of Brazil and ahead of the United States. If we look at the IMF's projections of growth in Canada, our GDP is projected to grow more in the year 2025 than any other G7 country.

We will not apologize on this side of the House for being optimistic about Canada's future.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, especially for Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil and gas industry, where for the second year in a row, there were no bids for new exploration licenses. Energy NL says it was not unexpected, pointing to a complex, inconsistent and burdensome regulatory system, including the only emissions cap in the world.

Therefore, will the economic assassins get rid of the stupid cap so that we can export Canadian oil and gas instead of jobs?

The Speaker: I would just like to encourage members to be judicious in their use of language.

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

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was 50% higher. What was? It was the amount more of imports of foreign oil into Canada when the Conservatives were in government than when we are.

When it comes to standing up for our industries, whether it is the energy sector, whether it is steel workers or whether it is agricultural workers, there is one party in the House that does that consistently, and it is the Liberal Party of Canada. The Conservatives say to give it all away, and we will not do that. We will always stand up for Canadians, our workers and our economy.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim they are prepared for a potential surge of migrants in response to Donald Trump's threats of deportation. However, being prepared means keeping an eye on the borders. Under the safe third country agreement, anyone who crosses the border secretly can apply for asylum in Canada after 14 days.

Since the closure of Roxham Road, the vast majority of the RCMP officers have been redeployed. There used to be about a hundred of them covering 160 kilometres around Roxham Road, but on June 29, Radio-Canada reported that there were only six. I have a question for the minister. As of today, how many officers are there at the border?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP commissioner and the RCMP's commanding officer in Quebec have both made it clear that the RCMP has not reduced its numbers in Quebec. In fact, we have invested more in the RCMP and in border services. I have great confidence that they are prepared to deal with any eventuality at any time. It is their job to be ready and to anticipate events at the border, and that is precisely what they are doing. We must have faith in their preparedness and in their work.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is so worried that it is considering patrolling the border itself. This morning, in committee, the Minister of Public Safety told me that he is surprised that François Legault would want to send officers to the border when that is strictly and completely a federal responsibility. That is the problem. It is a federal responsibility, but the federal government does not seem to have any plan for the border. Nature abhors a vacuum, so since the federal government does not seem to be taking any action on the border, Quebec has to step in.

What is the plan and how many officers are being deployed to the border?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate my colleague's question. What is more, I enjoyed appearing before the committee today. We discussed this specific issue. I reassured the committee that the RCMP and border services are always prepared for any eventuality. My colleague was there. The plans have been in place for several months. I think we have to trust them and understand that describing the details of police plans in the House of Commons is not very responsible from a security standpoint.

Oral Questions

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if anyone is still looking for a reason to doubt the federal government's preparedness, I have something to tell them. This morning, in committee, the Minister of Public Safety told me that we should not imagine the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people before it becomes an actual threat. He is telling us that he is going to wait until it becomes a threat before he takes any action. He even told us that the situation is not urgent because Trump does not take office until January. The minister is not a member of the national improv league. He is a member of government. It is his job to anticipate crises. We have had enough of amateur hour.

When will he take action?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the Bloc Québécois had rightly distanced itself from the CAQ government and was no longer fearmongering about asylum seekers, but it seems a leopard never changes its spots. We have always been able to manage the border effectively, and we will continue to do so. Everyone understands that it would be pretty silly of us to reveal our plans in the House of Commons.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Canada's environment commissioner proved the Liberals are fake environmentalists. A damning report revealed that the Liberals are not on track to meet their own emissions reduction targets despite their plan to quadruple the carbon tax. According to the commissioner, the Liberals are deceiving Canadians with “unreliable emissions reduction estimates.” It is all pain and no gain.

Why are the Liberals driving Canadians to food banks with their costly carbon tax while getting nothing in return?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner's report looks back at what has been happening since 1990. What did not happen under the Harper years was any type of action on climate change. There were no measures for energy efficiency, no measures for transit, no measures for electrification of transportation and no measures for renewable energy.

This has changed since 2015. We have bent the curves. We were going to miss our 2030 targets by at least 30%. We are 7% below 2005 levels. That is because of what we have been doing. It is about climate, about jobs, about the economy and about the safety of Canadians.

• (1445)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot believe a word the Liberals say on the environment. Even the environment commissioner revealed that the Liberals misled Canadians on their emissions claims. He stated, “The recent decreases to projected 2030 emissions were not due to climate actions taken by governments”.

While the environment minister punishes Canadians with a carbon tax, Canada has the worst record in the G7 for emissions reductions under the Liberals. Now that the truth has been exposed by the commissioner, will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Auditor General confirmed is that Canada's emissions are down below levels that we have not seen since the mid-1990s. We have proposed more measures to drive our emissions down, and the Conservatives want to work against us.

What the Conservatives have confirmed today is that they do not work for Canadians. They do not care about the environment; they do not listen to science. They want our emissions to go up. Their failed former leader from Regina—Qu'Appelle has said repeatedly that our emissions are superior to those of other countries and should be driven up; we should be given permission to produce more greenhouse gas emissions than other countries.

On this side of the House, we believe in science, and we are fighting climate change.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is going up, and greenhouse gas emissions are going up too. The Liberals have a tax plan, not an environmental plan.

Since they introduced the carbon tax, Canada has fallen to 62nd place out of 67 countries in the climate performance index. Meanwhile, the Minister of Environment is burning fuel to go and talk about climate change at COP. The Liberals care more about their image than they do about real results.

When will the election be called?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that question has already been answered. What Canadians really want to know is that they have a government with the potential to show leadership on national security.

How is it that a Conservative leader who wants to lead the government and one day head up the Coast Guard cannot even get his security clearance? What do the Conservatives have to hide, and what do they not want us to know?

They should do their job and get their security clearance.

Oral Questions

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a “breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery” is what the United Nations called the Conservative-Liberal temporary foreign worker program. It is an immigration program that uses closed work permits that trap people to one employer. It abuses, exploits and underpays migrant workers to help big businesses. It drives down wages and hurts everyone. It is just another initiative of the Conservatives and Liberals helping wealthy CEOs.

Will the Liberals stop this exploitation of migrant workers by ending the closed work permit system, yes or no?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mistreatment and abuse of temporary foreign workers is unacceptable. Everyone deserves to work in safe, healthy and dignified conditions. Under our watch, we have mandated that employers provide all TFWs with information about their rights in Canada, prohibited reprisal by employers against workers who come forward with complaints and prohibited employers from charging recruitment fees to workers.

In budget 2024, we are investing \$41 million to ensure that TFWs know their rights by funding community organizations. We know there is more work to do—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would once again ask all members, especially the member for Vancouver East, who just asked the question, to please not take the floor unless recognized by the Chair.

The hon member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Berens River First Nation still does not have clean drinking water. The water treatment plant is over a year behind schedule, and the community has been forced to haul water over 300 kilometres by truck every time, costing thousands of dollars. The lack of clean water has had an impact on dialysis patients, the health of children, elders and the whole community. However, the Liberals are not keeping on top of the contractor who has not gotten the job done. They are not funding the equipment the first nation has asked for.

Once again, the Liberals are failing first nations on clean water. What are they going to do to deliver clean water to Berens River now?

• (1450)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of the INAN committee, who passed a government amendment declaring it a human right to clean drinking water on first nations. That is historic for this country. I really hope the member opposite will help ensure that we have a smooth passage of the

bill through the House and into the Senate, so we can get this law in place and protect water for generations to come. I also want to congratulate two of the first nations in her own riding, which just recently received funding for K-to-12 schools.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most difficult tasks faced by our government was to repair Veterans Affairs Canada after all the damage done by the former Conservative government. I know that it was tough to fix, but I also know that many hard-working public servants at Veterans Affairs headquarters on Prince Edward Island are proud to make a positive impact once again.

As that most solemn of days approaches, November 11, will the Minister of Agriculture share with the House how our government has been helping to make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we are aware, the last Conservative government slashed funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs, hurt veterans and closed nine Veterans Affairs offices that serve veterans right across this country. Since we formed government, we have invested over \$11 billion in veteran support and have reopened the nine offices across this country.

Veterans can be assured that the Liberal government will continue to support veterans right across the country.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, revelations in court filings show that there is another lawsuit against the Liberal minister from Edmonton showing that he broke the law. This one shows his shady company and his business partner, and now the minister has been directly named in a lawsuit in their search for buyers. A text message says that they are going to sell this and reports updating Felix and Randy. Another asks if the person is confident and says they will not tell Shawna, Felix and Randy yet. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is not worth the cost or the corruption.

Will the Liberal minister from Edmonton stand up and admit to Canadians that he broke the law?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this issue has been dealt with by the Ethics Commissioner, who has cleared the member on three occasions.

When it comes to his former business partner, we agree with the House. He should have been clear and answered those questions, and now he will face the consequences.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot believe a word from the Liberals when it comes to this scandal.

We know that the cabinet minister was sitting around the table while his company was applying for federal government contracts, and we know that his business lied before a parliamentary committee, but there is more explosive reporting today about the Liberal minister from Edmonton and his company fraudulently applying for government contracts. Experts are saying that, if this is proven to be true, the Prime Minister should expel the minister from the cabinet. Conservatives are saying we should call the cops.

Will the Prime Minister fire the minister today or wait until he is dragged out in handcuffs?

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is referring to an article that came out today, and I can assure everyone in the House and those watching that the article confirms that the company in question has never received any contracts as an indigenous business and has never been listed on the Indigenous Business Directory.

Our focus is on building up indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs through procurement. We are not going to let any members across the way try to block the progress to achieving economic reconciliation. We will continue to work with indigenous partners to reduce barriers and increase participation in federal procurement.

• (1455)

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indigenous people are outraged that government contracts meant for indigenous businesses are being scooped up by shady companies with no indigenous connection. Today we learned that the Minister of Employment's fraud-ridden company, Global Health Imports, claimed to be indigenous in order to try to secure millions in lucrative government contracts. This all happened while the Minister of Employment was actively running the company.

It is time to end the charade. When will the minister admit that he is the real Randy, acknowledge that it is wrong to falsely claim indigenous heritage and take contracts meant for indigenous people, and resign?

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are making every effort to ensure that indigenous people are properly associated with the contracts that are procured. That is why we have established the very motion that is going forward. Members opposite want to criticize and be critical of the program, but it is essential to ensure that indigenous people have the ability to gain economic success and integration so that they too can succeed.

Oral Questions

We understand that those on the indigenous list are managed appropriately, and the procurement process is also taking transparent measures forward.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today it was revealed that a company co-owned by the employment minister bid on federal contracts while claiming that it was indigenous owned. The company, Global Health Imports, has two shareholders. It would perhaps be three if we counted the other Randy. However, according to the Assembly of First Nations, the Liberals' indigenous procurement program is being abused by shell companies, with the vast majority of those federal contracts going to non-indigenous businesses.

Will the Prime Minister listen to those leaders, call an investigation and remove the minister from cabinet until the inquiry is finished?

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the article makes it very clear that the association being referenced here did not get a contract. It was not listed on the indigenous list, and we take the appropriate steps in a procurement to ensure that does not happen.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the government says is one thing, the facts are another, and rarely the twain do meet, unfortunately. The environment commissioner's reports are painful to read. Despite the minister's claims, the Liberal record is bleak. The government cares little about the survival of threatened species, and Canada lags behind every other G7 country when it comes to meeting its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

The Liberals have checked out. Are they really entrusting biodiversity and the fight against climate change to the Conservatives?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows how much I respect him, but he still belongs to a party that wants to team up with the Conservative Party to bring down the government and prevent us from putting a cap on greenhouse gas emissions in the oil and gas sector and from passing a bill on accountability for the protection of nature.

I would also like to remind him that, when we took office in 2015, Canada was not even protecting 1% of its marine and coastal areas. We are at almost 16% today. We will be at 30% by 2030, as we promised at COP15 in Montreal.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The Speaker: For the second time today, I am going to ask the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake to please not take the floor unless recognized by the Chair.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada has six years left to reach its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45% below 2005 levels.

According to the environment commissioner, Canada had barely reduced its emissions by a laughable 7.1% by 2022. At this rate, every forest will have burned to the ground and every glacier will have melted before the federal government wakes up. A mere 7.1% is not even one-sixth of the much-vaunted target.

Do the Liberals really want to leave the future of the planet in the hands of the Conservatives and the oil and gas companies?

• (1500)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleague that, when we took office in 2015, Canada was expected to miss its 2030 target by at least 30%.

We flattened that curve. In 2022, we were at 7% below 2005 levels. In terms of pollution, the difference between the two is equivalent to putting an extra 69 million vehicles on Canada's roads.

It is all thanks to our plan. Our plan is working, but more needs to be done. I will be very happy to work with my colleague so that Canada can do more to fight climate change.

* * *

*[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost of housing, and veterans who fought for our country are feeling the pinch more than anyone. Sadly, veterans are three times more likely to become homeless, and a recent study indicates that there are four times more homeless veterans than the government claims. There are as many as 10,000 homeless veterans, in fact. That is 10,000 too many.

How can the government that caused the problem and will not even admit the extent of the problem be trusted to fix the problem?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cost of sending our citizens to war includes the cost of taking care of them when they come home. That is why we have moved forward with programs that are designed to ensure that communities have the capacity to provide housing to those who have put their lives at risk in order to protect our country overseas and at home.

I recently was able to work with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness to scale up a program that has ended functional homelessness for veterans in three communities across the country so that they can expand it to 26 additional cities. We have also

worked very closely with community organizations across the country.

What is disappointing is that when it came time to put our position on the record, the Conservatives voted against this program.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of homeless veterans just keeps going up, so obviously the photo ops and press releases are not getting the job done.

The Veterans Association Food Bank in Calgary reports that in the last six months alone its numbers have tripled in what it is spending to keep veterans housed, clothed and fed.

Veterans served our country and they deserve better than the homelessness and hunger that they are getting from the NDP-Liberal government. Veterans, like all Canadians, cannot afford the cost.

When will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election so that veterans can finally get the respect they deserve?

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not going to take any lessons from the Conservatives. They shut down nine Veterans Affairs offices. We opened nine, plus another one in my hometown of Surrey Centre. They laid off 1,000 Veterans Affairs officers who were there to help veterans get the services they need. We reinstated those services. We have created services to help those veterans get the what they need, and we will continue to do so going forward.

* * *

*[Translation]***HOUSING**

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this government, the cost of housing and mortgages has doubled, and homelessness is up. This Liberal failure was supported by the Bloc Québécois during two confidence votes.

The Conservatives will axe the GST on the sale of certain homes, and the Corporation des propriétaires immobiliers du Québec, the Quebec landlords' association, has said that the Conservative leader's proposal is one more idea for reducing housing-related costs and called it a step in the right direction.

Will the "Liberal Bloc" axe the GST on housing, or is it going to just keep funding programs that do not get any results?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is well aware, we are making investments to build affordable housing. For example, we signed an agreement with Quebec under the housing accelerator fund to build 8,000 social housing units. The Conservative Party is against that. When given the opportunity to remove the GST on new apartments, the Conservatives opposed it.

The Conservative Party leader's strategy is to cut, cut, cut measures that support construction. That is unacceptable.

• (1505)

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cities like Toronto are on the front lines when it comes to responding to the housing crisis. That is why, last year, we announced a half-a-billion dollar federal investment in Toronto through the housing accelerator fund to unlock over 53,000 new homes over the next decade.

Last week, the Conservative leader announced a plan that will impact home building in Toronto by making dangerous cuts to housing investments. People in my constituency of Davenport cannot afford these kinds of enormous Conservative housing cuts.

My question is for the Minister of Housing. How can we stop these Conservative cuts and solve the housing crisis for Canadians?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to offer a couple of points.

First, I want to thank my colleague for her advocacy for her community to receive funding through the housing accelerator fund, which is delivering hundreds of millions of dollars for housing in Toronto. What is fascinating is the Conservative strategy, which is now to forbid their MPs from advocating for their communities. On this side of the House, we have community advocates who will stand up so that their communities get the funding they need.

Second, we know that actually building homes takes investments. That is why we are putting money into the system to help build affordable housing, to help reduce barriers to construction.

Third, the Conservative strategy is to cut billions of dollars from housing. That simply is not going to work.

The Speaker: If the member for Kingston and the Islands wishes to have a conversation, I would ask him to please have it off-line.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's failed gun policies are putting Toronto at risk. This year, there were 126 more shootings in Toronto compared to last year. The Peel Regional Police reports that it is seizing one illegal firearm every 36 hours.

The Liberal MPs who were elected from the Toronto area should be here making noise about these problems, but they are silent. Why are they silent? Because they have decided to back the Prime Minister's failed policies.

When will they stop choosing the Prime Minister over the people?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position as members of the Liberal Party and my position as a Toronto MP is simple: Let us keep the citizens of our cities safe. How do we do that? By ensuring that we have less gun violence on our streets. How do we do that? By shoring up our borders to prevent guns from crossing the border, the specific border services that the Conservative party cut when it was in power prior to 2015.

We also recognize the important impact on domestic violence that gunfire has. When we keep guns out of the homes of people in cities in Canada, we are ensuring that domestic violence does not have a pernicious impact on women. That is how we keep Canadians safe.

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want my friends and neighbours in Toronto to take note that the Liberal justice minister is looking back at things that happened over 10 years ago, while he has been here for nine years and takes zero responsibility for crime getting worse. Imagine getting elected to serve his constituents, sitting here for nine years and cannot take a single bit of responsibility for a problem that he should be trying to fix.

It is very clear: Crime is worse. The Liberal MPs elected to serve Toronto are failing to do their job. When will they stop choosing the Prime Minister over the people?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government works very effectively with law enforcement professionals across the country, including the Peel Regional Police that my colleague referred to, the City of Toronto and the York Regional Police. We have invested money that the Conservatives cut in the RCMP and border services to prevent illegal guns from entering the country.

We are very surprised that the Conservative Party would turn back gun control legislation designed to protect Canadians by making it legal again to have assault-style firearms on the streets of the country.

Oral Questions

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, corruption or crime. Since 2015, when they formed government, violent crime has skyrocketed by 50%. Sadly, during their reign of error, they have also allowed an evil monster, Paul Bernardo, to be transferred to a medium-security institution.

On November 26, this child rapist and serial killer is scheduled to have a parole hearing.

Will the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister finally get tough on crime and assure Canadians that Paul Bernardo will remain behind bars, where he belongs for the rest of his life?

• (1510)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for all members in the House not to use the names of some of the most notorious killers in the country and give them the exact publicity that they crave. This individual is locked up in a federal prison behind two very high fences with a lot of razor wire. I saw, for myself, the secure federal correctional facility that this individual is in.

My colleague also knows that the parole board is independent and it would be absolutely inappropriate to prejudge its work. However, I have confidence that it will do its work properly for public safety.

* * *

SPORT

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer, millions of Canadians tuned in to CBC to cheer on team Canada at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. Canadian athletes pushed limits, set new records and showed us the unifying power of sport. Many trained at the Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic in Halifax West.

Canada's athletes give it their all to represent our country, so we are going to keep supporting them with more pay for more athletes as they train to represent Canada.

Could the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity tell us how we are going to support these athletes so they can keep representing Canada with pride and excellence?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Paris 2024 games were extraordinary. Canadians cheered on our Olympic and Paralympic teams, as records were broken, medals were won and history was made.

The journey from playground to podium is long and hard, and our athletes train for years. Our Liberal government is proud to support over 1,900 athletes through the athlete assistance program and we are also proud to be increasing this program to provide more money for more athletes. An additional \$7 million a year means a 23% increase in the living allowance and an additional 30% allowance for Paralympic athletes.

By investing in Canadian athletes, we are inspiring the next generation and building a stronger, united Canada.

HOUSING

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, homelessness is growing among seniors for the first time ever. Canadian seniors who live on fixed incomes are being hit hardest by skyrocketing rents, driven by unregulated corporate greed.

The Liberals have sat by while private investors jack up their rents and squeeze our parents, grandparents and veterans out of their homes.

When will the Liberals stop caving to corporate landlords and private long-term care investors to protect seniors?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concern about the plight of some of Canada's most vulnerable, those without a roof over their head. In order to address those challenges, we need to ensure that we build out the affordable housing stock so people can find a place that is safe and that they can afford.

That is why we are moving forward with billions of dollars of investments to help build affordable housing in our country at a pace not seen in many decades. It is why we put money on the table to support non-profits to buy up existing affordable housing in the market to ensure that it remains affordable forever. It is also why we have restored, after decades of cuts, more investments in co-operative and affordable housing.

We will continue to do what it takes to ensure every Canadian has affordable housing.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will soon pause to remember the brave men and women of Canada's armed forces who served our country and made the ultimate sacrifice.

Whether in Flanders, on Juno Beach, the hills of Korea or the sands of Afghanistan, they fought for Canada, for our democracy and the freedoms we all enjoy today.

I am proud to wear this country's uniform. I believe in our democratic institutions. I believe all members of the House are duty-bound to accept and hold high the torch passed from those fallen in the defence of Canada.

I respectfully ask government members if they all can say the same.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all admire the sacrifice and service that veterans have given for us. I think that question was quite out of line. However, as it is Veterans' Week, it does deserve to remember and commend all the veterans who sacrificed their lives, given back for our freedoms and protected the democratic processes that we have today. We will always remember them not only on Veterans Week but every day of this year.

• (1515)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations, and I hope that if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion: That the House, one, recognizes that attacks on places of worship threaten all Canadians' charter-protected right to freedom of worship; two, recognizes the recent increases in attacks targeting places of worship; three, calls for the government to work urgently with—

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

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

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Simcoe North to the motion to concur in the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

Call in the members.

• (1545)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 880)

YEAS

Members

Aboultair	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong

Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Dalton	Dance
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Garrison	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hallan
Hoback	Hughes
Idlout	Jeneroux
Jivani	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Khanna	Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacGregor	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Masse	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poillievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiple	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zarrillo	Zimmer — 174

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Drouin	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Gerretsen	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Iacono	Ien
Jaczek	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Medicino	Miao
Miller	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sorbara
Sousa	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal

Vandenbeld
Weiler
Zahid

Virani
Yip
Zuberi— 146

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Kitchen

Gaudreau
Mendès— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

● (1555)

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

(*Division No. 881*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Angus
Ashton
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Blaney
Boulerice
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Collins (Victoria)
Dalton
Dancho
Davies
Deltell
Desilets
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Garrison
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Green
Hoback
Idlout
Jivani
Julian

Aitchison
Allison
Arnold
Bachrach
Barlow
Barron
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Cooper
Dance
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Gazan
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hallan
Hughes
Jeneroux
Johns
Kelly

Routine Proceedings

Khanna
 Kramp-Neuman
 Kusie
 Lake
 Larouche
 Lehoux
 Leslie
 Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Lloyd
 MacGregor
 Majumdar
 Masse
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McPherson
 Michaud
 Morantz
 Morrison
 Muys
 Normandin
 Paul-Hus
 Perkins
 Plamondon
 Rayes
 Reid
 Richards
 Rood
 Sauvé
 Schmale
 Shields
 Simard
 Singh
 Soroka
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
 Stubbs
 Therrien
 Tolmie
 Uppal
 Vecchio
 Vien
 Vignola
 Vis
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Williamson
 Zimmer — 173

Kmiec
 Kurek
 Kwan
 Lantsman
 Lawrence
 Lemire
 Lewis (Essex)
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Maguire
 Martel
 Mathysen
 Mazier
 McLean
 Melillo
 Moore
 Morrice
 Motz
 Nater
 Patzer
 Pauzé
 Perron
 Poilievre
 Redekopp
 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Ruff
 Savard-Tremblay
 Seebach
 Shipley
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Small
 Steinley
 Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
 Strahl
 Thériault
 Tochor
 Trudel
 Van Popta
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Wagantall
 Waugh
 Williams
 Zarrillo

Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser
 Fry
 Gainey
 Gould
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Holland
 Hussen
 Ien
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Kelloway
 Khera
 Kusmierczyk
 Lambropoulos
 Lapointe
 Lauzon
 Lebouthillier
 Long
 Lotis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 Maloney
 May (Cambridge)
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Miao
 Morrissey
 Naqvi
 Noormohamed
 Oliphant
 Petitpas Taylor
 Qualtrough
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Scarpaleggia
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Sorbara
 St-Onge
 Tassi
 Thompson
 Turnbull
 Van Bynen
 Vandal
 Virani
 Yip
 Zuberi — 147

Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Freeland
 Gaheer
 Gerretsen
 Guilbeault
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Housefather
 Iacono
 Jaczek
 Jones
 Kayabaga
 Khalid
 Koutrakis
 Lalonde
 Lamoureux
 Lattanzio
 LeBlanc
 Lightbound
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Martinez Ferrada
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Medicino
 Miller
 Murray
 Ng
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Powlowski
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sousa
 Sudds
 Taylor Roy
 Trudeau
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandenbeld
 Weiler
 Zahid

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
 Anand
 Arseneault
 Atwin
 Bains
 Battiste
 Bendayan
 Bittle
 Blois
 Bradford
 Carr
 Chagger
 Champagne
 Chen
 Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
 Coteau
 Damoff
 Dhillion
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Dzerowicz
 El-Khoury

Ali
 Anandasangaree
 Arya
 Badawey
 Baker
 Beech
 Bibeau
 Blair
 Boissonnault
 Brière
 Casey
 Chahal
 Chatel
 Chiang
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Dhaliwal
 Diab
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Ehsassi
 Erskine-Smith

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North) Gaudreau
 Kitchen Mendès — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Accordingly, the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology is referred to the standing committee.

* * *

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been renewed consultations, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House:

Privilege

- (a) recognize that attacks on places of worship threaten all Canadians' Charter-protected right to freedom of worship;
- (b) recognize the recent increase in attacks targeting places of worship; and
- (c) call on the government to work in full cooperation with provinces, territories, and municipalities that want to establish protective bubble zones at places of worship.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by another 24 minutes, for a total of 48 minutes.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, I would like to ask the government House Leader if she would inform the House what business she intends to call before the House for the remainder of this week, as well as the week after our constituency week, and if she could inform the House whether the documents related to the \$400-million green slush fund have been tabled, as was ordered by the House?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, the motion that the Speaker presented actually said to refer this matter to the procedure and House affairs committee. That is exactly what we support.

We look forward to the Conservatives ending their silly games, starting to respect the charter rights of Canadians and the independence of the police, and moving this to committee to make sure that we respect the independence of powers in this country. I will also note that thousands of pages have indeed been tabled. They have just been done so in a way that respects the charter rights of Canadians.

We are looking forward to debating, once the Conservatives stop freezing the work of this place, important legislation, such as Bill C-71, concerning citizenship; Bill C-66 on military justice; Bill C-63, the online harms legislation; and two ways and means motions, one related to capital gains and one that would require more transparency from charities that use deceptive tactics to push women away from making their own reproductive decisions.

[*Translation*]

On this side of the House, we will continue to work for Canadians and represent their interests. I wish all members would do the same.

• (1600)

[*English*]

As it is Remembrance Week, and we are coming up to Remembrance Day, I would like to take a moment to thank every service

member and every veteran who has served our country, both in times of conflict and in times of peace. I know that every member in the House will be taking a moment on Remembrance Day to remember the sacrifices of our veterans and of those who continue to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Lest we forget.

The Deputy Speaker: We will remember them.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

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

However, I will take a brief moment to say that, a number of weeks ago, a friend of the Conservative Party, and the father of former member Monte Solberg, Stan Solberg, passed away. His funeral was this past Monday. I know many gathered to celebrate the life of Stan Solberg, who was a true patriot and proud Canadian. I had the chance to work with him in politics for many years in a volunteer capacity. Even just a number of months ago, I had a great visit with him. He was always a visionary, thinking forward about the future of Alberta and the future of this country. He was a real patriot, a proud Conservative, and certainly a great Albertan and great Canadian. We remember Stan Solberg here today.

As well, like some of the members who spoke before me, this will likely be my last opportunity to rise in this place before Remembrance Day. I want to say God bless our troops, past and present, for the work they have done and the sacrifice they have made, and continue to make, to keep us free. We can never let down our guard and not support those who fight so hard for what is right. God bless our troops. Lest we forget.

I am once again rising to join in the discussion about a scandal that has paralyzed Parliament. We are seeing a scandal that was initially referred to as one that would be mammoth in comparison to the sponsorship scandal, which brought down the Chrétien-Martin government. As details have been revealed, we certainly see how that is truly the case.

I am glad to rise in my place today and have the ability to share some comments. This is also being streamed. The live feed from the House of Commons is being streamed on Facebook. For those who are watching on my Facebook page, I would welcome them to share their comments and feedback, and I look forward to hopefully integrating some of that into the discussion here today. We are discussing misappropriation, the conflicts of interest and what we have learned was ultimately nearly \$400 million of hard-earned taxpayer dollars that was given to insiders of the government. It was rife with conflicts of interest.

Here we are, more than a month into this debate, when the Speaker of the House of Commons has ruled that the government has to release the documents, because the Liberals simply refuse. I would like to unpack things because the Liberals are very good at trying to divide and distract from what the real issue is. Let me unpack it very simply: The Liberals have the ability and the authority to release the documents today, but they refuse to do so. This debate was not started by the Conservatives. It was started by, and has been sustained by, the Liberals, who refuse to release the documents.

The Liberals will talk about privacy. They will talk about the independence of the judiciary. They will talk about all these things, but what they fail to talk about, at every step of the process, is that they have the right, and I would suggest the responsibility, to uphold the standard that Canadians would expect of a government of any colour and to be transparent.

There is nothing stopping the Liberals from walking into this place and placing those documents on the table. There is nothing stopping them from releasing them, but they refuse. As a result, Parliament is exercising its constitutional authority, which is the ability that Parliament has by nature of what Parliament is. We are exercising our ability to demand these documents and taking great care to not interfere in the process of justice. We are ensuring that great care is taken in that regard.

However, it comes down to the simple truth. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals could release the documents today, but they refuse to do so. One has to ask what they are hiding. What is so embarrassing? What types of scandal and corruption would be revealed if those things came to light?

● (1605)

It is becoming increasingly clear that the cover-up is more important to the Liberals than anything else the government has been tasked to do. The Prime Minister and the Liberals have now, for more than a month, paralyzed Parliament. This is on them. They could release the documents.

I have heard from Amber, who is asking, “How are there no repercussions for the corruption that has been proven...?” I thank Amber for that question. The Auditor General, the non-partisan officer of Parliament who looks at the books, found that there were incredible discrepancies, and there have been conflicts of interest found at every stage of the process. It has caused an erosion of trust.

I am asked this question often: If a regular Canadian was to do what the Prime Minister, the cabinet and those members keep do-

Privilege

ing, would there not be consequences? Would there not be prison time? Would there not be criminal prosecutions? Those Liberals have been paralyzing the actions of Parliament for more than a month to keep these documents from being released.

Lise is asking about “the corruption that happened in the Winnipeg lab”. There are 20 minutes allotted to each of these speeches, and in some cases, a number of colleagues have started listing off the number of scandals that have happened under the Prime Minister and these Liberals. After nine years of these Liberals, we can hardly get through just reading the list.

On the question surrounding the Winnipeg lab documents, it was the Liberals who took the unprecedented step of taking the Speaker to court. It was unprecedented that the government would take the Speaker to court to cover up its corruption.

With this \$400-million green slush fund scandal, we are seeing that the Liberals will stop at nothing, including paralyzing Parliament for months on end, to keep the truth from coming out, which leads us to ask what I think is a very fair question about accountability. From what I am hearing from folks who are watching this debate right now, there has to be accountability.

Patricia says that there need to be stiffer penalties and laws to protect Canadians and Canadian tax dollars against this corruption and to stop the conflicts of interest. That sounds like common sense. Canadians want an election. It needs to end so we can get a government in to clean this up. That is from Patricia, who is frustrated, obviously, with the corruption we are seeing.

Esther is asking, “Are there no rules that can be enforced...?” It is a good thing Parliament exists because this is the final mechanism. While the Liberals try each and every day to force Parliament to bend to their will, the Conservatives will not do so. We will stand up for the rights of Canadians, including democracy, which is represented in this place.

To Esther, Conservatives are fighting for accountability, which is absolutely essential in the way we go about everything we do here. That includes making sure we continue to demand that the Liberals release the documents so we get answers in the \$400-million green slush fund. Where there is smoke, there is fire, as the old adage goes.

What has become incredibly clear is that these Liberals are covering up something. Nobody would go to the great lengths they have to cover up corruption unless they had something truly to hide. The question was asked about there being no rules. It is a good thing Parliament exists because Parliament and the premise of parliamentary supremacy persists beyond a corrupt Prime Minister and a government that is certainly not worth the cost.

Privilege

● (1610)

Jordan asks a great question: Why are there so many silent Liberals? Jordan asks why the member for Malpeque and other Liberals refuse to stand up and ask for accountability. Do they work for the Prime Minister or do they work for their constituents? I think it is a very fair question, so on behalf of Jordan, I ask every Liberal member of Parliament whether they will stand up for the people who sent them here, beyond the guy who sits in the front row who has proven he does not care about their best interests, certainly, because time and time again he shows how he will put personal political gain ahead of the best interests of the country. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Debbie says, "Somebody should be able to stop Trudeau and the corruption." I agree. That is a good thing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Damien Kurek: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. It was a quote. I withdraw that. In the Saskatchewan legislature, one is allowed to read quotes. Due to my time at the Saskatchewan legislature, it is a habit.

The question, I think, is incredibly valid. I am glad the Liberals opposite are paying attention, because they should listen to what Debbie has to say, which is that somebody should stop the corruption. I would tell Debbie the good news is that the Conservatives are fighting every day on her behalf. As soon as we are able to have a carbon tax election, we are going to get a common-sense government, led by the member for Carleton, who is going to bring integrity and accountability back into the way we do things in this place. In the meantime, we are going to continue to stand up for Canadians to fight that corruption, whether it is the \$400-million green slush fund or the many other examples of corruption.

Michael asks a question that more or less demands there be no more coalitions. What is interesting about that is that in the last election, Conservatives said a vote for the NDP was a vote for the Liberals. We were told at the time that would not happen; there would be no coalition. However, only months after the last election, out marched the leader of the NDP, along with the Prime Minister, with their so-called confidence and supply agreement, a blank cheque to do everything. Even though the leader of the fourth party supposedly ripped up the agreement, the NDP still seems very willing to support the Prime Minister being in charge.

Eva said, "There should be no scandals." That emphasizes a very important point. The government talks a lot about the money it spends, but the simple truth of the matter is that it is not its money. The \$400 million in the green slush fund that was allocated in conflicts of interest to Liberal insiders and those with connections to SDTC is one example of many.

Every dollar the government spends is not its money. It comes from somewhere. In particular, it comes from hard-working Canadians in the form of taxes. Certainly, there should be no scandals, because every person who makes a decision when it comes to the public purse should take great care to ensure that money is treated responsibly. Unfortunately, we see the devastating consequences that, after nine years of Justin Trudeau—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw. I may have spoken for a little while this morning at the justice committee. As for the Liberals, it is time for accountability, including the Prime Minister.

Carrie said, "When are we going to get taxpayers' money returned?" That is exactly it. I know when it comes to the policy role I have the opportunity to be a part of right now, and the position of Canadian Heritage, we are demanding that the \$18 million in bonuses paid out to executives and managers of the CBC be returned. It just makes sense. We have a failing organization, led by a failing government, that pays itself bonuses and in fact changed the rules. Whether it is SDTC, the CBC or the myriad of other scandals, it is clear that Canadians want their money back. It is absolutely essential that the respect for taxpayers' money is returned to this place.

● (1615)

We need to make sure this place respects the immense privilege we all have to steward the democracy of the land. Quite often the intricacies of Parliament are not well understood, which is unfortunate for somebody who is passionate about the systems we have developed, such as the Parliament of Canada and the Westminster system and its history dating back so many centuries. It is only by act, will and proclamation of Parliament that any dollar can be spent.

That history speaks to something that is often forgotten. In centuries past, when kings in the United Kingdom wanted money, wanted to tax their subjects, there was significant conflict and quite often it would result in war. However, throughout history, there was this coming together to say it was time to ensure the people had a voice. When the Liberals tried to pass a motion that would have given them unlimited spending and taxation authority for a period of 18 months, it was unprecedented in Westminster democracy. They tried to slip it through and say it was time for a team Canada approach. That was their excuse when the reality was that if they wanted a team Canada approach, they would have done the hard work to ensure taxpayers' dollars were respected, yet they refused to do so.

As Paula says, "These people are using our money, not theirs." I absolutely agree with Paula.

Randy says, "Canadians want a carbon tax election." I have another comment here about "the amount of money that is being spent, money going out the door to scandals, to interests that don't necessarily reflect what Canadians want."

Jacqueline says, "We need to have action to take on this." I would say to Jacqueline that the action is very simple: The Liberals need to release the documents. They are so obsessed with this cover-up that they are willing to throw out their agenda for the purpose of covering up the corruption.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have once again entered into this debate. We have seen close to \$400 million in taxpayers' money spent. The Liberals are quick to suggest that this fund that gave grants to develop clean and new energy had been around for a long time. It had been around for a long time, but the Liberals broke it. In 2018, former industry minister Navdeep Bains, who did not like the board because it resembled Harper's vision too much, and the Liberals replaced the board. Since that point in time, it has been rife with scandals.

I will just give a shout-out to my wife, Danielle. She commented on there too. Love you, sweetheart.

I will conclude by saying this: Canadians deserve answers. Canadians deserve to see these documents. There needs to be accountability, which is the fundamental premise of what democracy is. I regret that after so many weeks the Liberals are still so bent on covering things up that they would paralyze Canada's Parliament to serve their own personal political interests. It is time for better, and Conservatives will bring it home.

• (1620)

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spent almost the entire day listening to the member speak. He talked about accountability. I just spent three hours in the justice committee listening to him filibuster, trying to block his own colleague from Peace River—Westlock because he had a very compelling argument that Bill C-270 should come to the House as soon as possible to be debated. Now I come to the House and I am listening to him give a speech about this privilege so nothing can be debated.

I want to know whether the member is prepared to make the argument to his House leader that was so compelling this morning to see if Conservatives will end this privilege nonsense and allow his colleague to, one, appear at committee and, two, come to the House to have this discussion again.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member took me up on my offer to continue the debate on this very important issue in the House of Commons. I would simply suggest that he tell his leader, the Prime Minister, and members of the cabinet he sits with that the answer to the problem of Parliament being paralyzed is to release the documents.

When it comes to Bill C-270, I would hope the member would support a bill that would place strict penalties on anybody who would share, without consent, explicit material and that would have age verification for any explicit material shared in this country. That is pretty clear common sense.

It is too bad the member and the Liberals have so mismanaged the legislative agenda that their scandals are paralyzing the good work this place should be able to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have said it a number of times: We agree that we want to have the documents and that what has been done is unacceptable. Now, why are we not voting?

Privilege

Are my colleagues in the Conservative Party aware that they are making the Liberals happy and helping them because, as long as the House is paralyzed, the Liberals are doing what they like to do best, which is nothing?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that we have this weird circumstance where we are debating one scandal through what is called a privilege motion, for those watching, and it takes priority. In this case, it is because the Liberals refuse to release documents. However, the next order of business is another scandal. We have the circumstance where it is not just one scandal that is being debated, but there is another scandal in line to be debated.

The Liberals, very interestingly, say they want to send this to committee to make it disappear. The fact of the matter is that they had an opportunity to vote to support a subamendment to send this to committee and they voted against it. It has become increasingly clear the Liberals do not care about accountability; they simply care about covering it up.

I will close by saying that Maxine said, "Don't you work for us? We deserve our taxpayer money to be spent responsibly." I agree with Maxine.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, it is my first time rising in the House today and I would like to acknowledge that it is International Inuit Day. I hope everyone enjoys this day.

There is a community in Nunavut called Kimmirut that just had a four-day power outage. As winter is coming quite soon, a lot of people were quite concerned about their well-being because of having no power in that community. I wonder if the member shares my outrage regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada not investing in potential sustainable development opportunities in Nunavut. The power plant in Kimmirut runs on diesel, and there need to be more ways to ensure we are transitioning to renewable energy.

I wonder if the member would share his comments about whether Sustainable Development Technology Canada was doing enough to make sure it focused its investments on sustainable development technology.

• (1625)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague from Nunavut in acknowledging International Inuit Day. I know the Leader of the Opposition put out a statement acknowledging that a little earlier today.

Privilege

I would note that the environment commissioner, in a report I believe was tabled in this place today, talked about that exact thing and how after nine years of the Liberals claiming to solve all the country's problems, they have done nothing more than make their friends rich. The consequence of that is very real to those in northern Canada who are facing days without power and those facing energy and food insecurity from coast to coast to coast. The consequences of Liberal mismanagement truly are devastating to Canadians.

I hope we can wake up to the reality that until there is a change in government, there will not be a change in the direction of this country.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent talk today. I am glad he was able to mention the comment from his wife. I know if I read a comment from my wife on Facebook, it would be something like, "Why didn't you take out the trash again?"

Part of the SDTC issue is that Industry Canada has a contribution agreement with SDTC, the green slush fund, that requires the board to report any conflicts of interest, real or perceived, to the Minister of Industry. It is right in the contribution agreement and was signed off on.

The Auditor General has found well over 80 conflicts of interest. Is my colleague wondering, like I am wondering, if the government is refusing to hand over the documents because they show that the Liberal-appointed board had conflicts of interest that were reported to both the past minister, Navdeep Bains, and the current minister, and they refused to act because they are more interested in supporting Liberal insiders than protecting taxpayers' money?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Edmonton West makes a very good point. A clear conflict exists when it comes to the depth of this scandal. Why are the Liberals so intent on covering up this \$400-million scandal? The documents, I have a suspicion, would reveal exactly that, because they were required to report conflicts of interest. The Liberals were in charge of managing those conflicts and ensuring that they did not happen. Why did they not do anything about them?

Canadians want answers. I support Canadians who are calling for answers. I just wish the government would finally release the documents so we can get them.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we just heard from the member for Nunavut about the incredible disappointment over what happened with this fund. There were so many things the money could have been spent on properly.

I would like my colleague to talk about our young people, who, of course, are concerned about the environment, having a home and being able to afford to go to school, all those dynamics. The Minister of Environment has been found wanting in this area. He is responsible for claiming the carbon tax is crucial, yet where is the money going?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question because it brings up a very important point. In the midst of the Liberals' corruption, the issues with SDTC, the list of scandals and everything associated with them, Canadians are hurting. Canadians do

care about the environment, including many of the energy workers and farmers I represent. We all care deeply about the environment.

The reality of that is that Canada is a world leader. However, under the Liberals, instead of unleashing the potential of this country, they are holding it back for their personal, political and partisan gains. When it comes to the scandal before us, it seems that it is not just political gains they are holding things back for. It seems that it is for their personal financial gains and the gains of their friends.

It is time for a change in this country, to bring back accountability and bring home a government that can be trusted to spend taxpayers' dollars with the respect they deserve. Accountability is needed. Let us get it now. Let us release the documents.

● (1630)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my comments about the Sustainable Development Technology Canada scandal, knowing that we are coming into Remembrance Week, I want to share with the House a poem. It is called *We Remain*, and it was written by T.S. Bedford:

We remain.
We stand between the living and the lost;
Between memory and tomorrow.
We give voice to the silent;
Presence to the missed.
We share yesterday with the parted
And today with the loved.
No one knows the shape of the future
Or where the path will lead.
But the lost will always walk with us;
So long as
We remain.

I have to say, at the start of this speech today, that I cannot believe we are still here. I cannot believe that we talked about this topic in September and for all of October, and that it is November and we are still talking about it. For those at home who do not know what this privilege motion is about, it all started with Sustainable Development Technology Canada, a fund that was supposed to support sustainable technology development. The fund was created in 2001 and worked fine under both Liberal and Conservative governments until the current corrupt Liberal government.

Basically, it appointed people to the committee that was going to decide who got the money, and all its members gave it to their own companies. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest, a whistle-blower implied that there was criminality involved and Parliament voted to have the documents related to this scandal produced. Of course, the Liberals did what they always do: They delayed and then produced the documents all blacked out without anything useful. The Speaker has correctly ruled that they need to produce the documents unredacted and that no government business or private member's business is going to take place in the House until that happens. We have been waiting for five weeks for the Liberals to produce the documents.

Bills are not coming forward, but there are some bills that I am glad are not coming forward, like the online harms bill, Bill C-63, which would do absolutely nothing to help children being sexually exploited online. Everybody wants that to be dealt with, but it would create a parallel system with no criminal consequences, and that would not help anyone. It would also put a person in jail for life if someone thinks they might commit a hate crime in the future. That is a chill on freedom of speech in this country. I am also happy that we do not have Bill C-65 coming forward, the bill that would give all Liberal and NDP members who are going to lose their seat in the next election their pensions by moving the election date out a week.

One of the bills that I would like to see come forward is unfortunately not happening. As part of the federal redistribution process, my riding was renamed Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong. The new chief of Bkejwanong, which is Walpole Island, objects to the use of that name. As soon as I heard that he objected to it, I asked it to be part of a bill to alter riding names that need to be changed, which is done regularly in the House. I am very disappointed that this bill is not coming forward, because now I am not able to do what the chief asked me to do and what I said I would do, which is bring it forward here.

The reason we are here is that the Liberals continue to block us by not producing the documents. Let us talk about some of the arguments that have been made.

The Liberals are saying they do not want to give the documents to the RCMP because that would be a violation of people's charter rights. I want to be clear that the RCMP gets tips all the time, like from Crime Stoppers. It follows up on them. Nothing is a violation of anybody's charter rights with respect to that. What would happen is that RCMP members would look into the documents, especially if we give some indication of where they should be looking, and if they found evidence of criminality and wanted to pursue criminal charges, they would go to a judge and order those documents to be produced so they could be officially used in a criminal trial. That is where we are at today.

● (1635)

I just want to recap a bit of the history of how this fund went so wrong.

* * *

2024 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole in order to welcome Canada's 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes, provided that:

- (a) the Speaker make welcoming remarks on behalf of the House;
- (b) the names of the athletes present be deemed read and printed in the House of Commons Debates for that day;
- (c) when the proceedings of the committee have concluded, the committee shall rise; and

Privilege

(d) only authorized photographers be permitted to take photos during the proceedings of the committee.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

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.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it will be a real joy to see all our Olympians, of whom we are so proud.

I will get back to the green slush fund scandal, which began with Navdeep Bains, who was then the minister of industry, science and economic development. He was involved in some questionable things. I want to read from one of the newspapers about the time when he stepped down:

...Bains was implicated in a questionable real estate transaction, when former Brampton mayor Linda Jeffrey's chief of staff [Mr.] Punia, shared confidential details about a land purchase with Bains and former Liberal MP Raj Grewal. When Brampton council learned about the behaviour it sent details of a third-party investigation into the matter to the RCMP, because the force was already looking into Grewal's activities involving chronic gambling in Ottawa while he served as an MP.

The City eventually paid about \$1 million extra for the land it was trying to acquire, after a group of local businessmen with ties to the Liberals purchased it, then flipped it to the City, after Punia had passed on details of the original offer the City had planned to make for the property, which was owned by the Province.

There is no evidence Bains has any ties to the [business]....

Just because we could not find evidence does not mean that nothing happened. The article continues:

Grewal was charged in September by the RCMP with five counts of fraud and breach of trust for alleged misuse of his constituency office budget while he was an MP, after an extensive investigation.

This was the kind of people who started the fund and then went forward with it. It then got a bit worse, because in 2019, the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change came along. He was one of the people who approved the money for the fund in 2021. He was a member of cabinet, which approved the billion dollars going into the slush fund.

I have one other thing to say about Navdeep Bains. The article reads:

Privilege

Bains was in the news again when questions were raised last year about his father's involvement with individuals implicated in a Fort Erie Gurdwara scandal. There is no evidence Bains has any ties with the plan and he denies any link.... The Sikh temple had sponsored three priests from India who were given special visas by Ottawa. It turned out the Gurdwara was not even operating and the three men disappeared after arriving in Canada.

We do not have any evidence of wrongdoing, but there is always suspicion. Here we are again with the same thing because the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was part of the cabinet that approved the billion dollars. One of the board members was a lady named Andr ee-Lise M ethot. She was the founder and managing partner of Cycle Capital, a company that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is invested in.

Section 119 of the Criminal Code says that no holder of public office, for example someone like the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, can take an action, for example giving a billion dollars to a slush fund that would be of benefit for themselves, for example his investment in Cycle Capital, which tripled its value through the money given to it from the green slush fund.

I certainly think that when the RCMP finishes its investigation and is able to see the documents, it could be that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change will be back in his orange pajamas again. He, as we know, was a convicted felon. In 2001 he was charged and convicted. He served a year's probation plus 100 hours of community service and paid \$1,000 of restitution.

This is the calibre of corruption in the Liberal government and cabinet. It is no wonder things go awry when these kinds of people are involved. The Liberals have been trying to suggest that they need to stand up for the charter rights of Canadians. I certainly wish they would, because they have not.

• (1640)

One is what their record says they are, and if we look at the record of the Liberal government on the matter, we see the chill the Liberals have put on freedom of speech in this country with Bill C-11, the censorship bill. With Bill C-18, the freedom of the press was compromised. Bill C-63, the online harms bill that I just talked about, once again would violate everyone's charter rights happily.

Then there is freedom of religion. I spoke about this before, but since then, things have escalated even further in our country. Have members heard about the persecution that Hindus are facing in Brampton? People were out with knives. There were violent attacks on temples. The government has done nothing about it. Liberals wring their pearls and say that it is unacceptable, but they have done nothing to ensure that the rule of law in this country is enforced.

What is the point of having rules to protect Canadians if they are not enforced, and why has the federal government, which has the highest authority to make sure that rights are protected, done nothing? A hundred or more Christian churches were burned in our country, and again, it is crickets from the Liberals on this. It goes on and on. What has happened to Jewish Canadians is heartbreaking. They have been constantly harassed, and their synagogues and their businesses are vandalized. They have been given death treats and nothing has been done. Certainly freedom of religion in this country is in serious jeopardy.

Furthermore, there is discrimination that happens. We are supposed to be free from discrimination in this country, but it happens even in the Liberal benches. The Liberals are discriminating based on age. They decided to give seniors who are older than 75 more money than the seniors who are between 65 and 75. Similarly, there are violations in the minority language rights; the government has been proven several times in court to not have done what it should have done to protect the minority language rights of Canadians.

Let me sidebar for a moment and say how proud I am to announce that Sarnia—Lambton has the official francophone designation of Ontario.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

I am very happy. I worked hard with the francophones of Sarnia—Lambton and I am very proud of our work.

[*English*]

The other argument we will hear from the Liberal benches is that the RCMP does not want the documents. Is it really the case that the RCMP does not want to see evidence of potential crime? The whistle-blower was clear that there was criminality going on, and it is possible that it was with more than one minister. I talked about the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, but actually there is also the current minister who was overseeing the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund.

There is an agreement that says the board members had to disclose any conflicts of interest to ISED, so the minister would have known about them and not acted. Perhaps that is what would be uncovered when the documents are released. Certainly there is an issue there.

I think that what happened in the slush fund is just another example, and we keep racking up dollars. I think about the number of scandals that have happened in the government since I came here in 2015. This one is \$400 million. There was the \$372 million the Liberals gave to Frank Baylis to make ventilators when he had never made ventilators before, and they never ended up using any of them. It goes on and on with the different scandals. There was the WE Charity scandal and the huge waste of money there.

Canadians are finding the current scandal particularly obscene, at a time when the number of people going to food banks is the highest it has ever been. There are also 1,400 tent encampments in Ontario alone, and they are spread across the country. At a time when people are struggling, cannot afford food and cannot afford to feed their family and heat their house, there is an incredible waste of money and people lining the pockets of insiders. It is just unacceptable.

When I look at some of the previous things that have happened, I ask myself what we need to do to put in place some accountability so that this sort of thing does not happen. What kind of protection can we provide to whistle-blowers? If it is going on in one department, what is going on in all the other funds?

It is said that the fish rots from the head. The Prime Minister has already been violating ethics laws in the billionaire island fiasco, and he is also under suspicion in the SNC-Lavalin scandal for pressuring a criminal prosecution, which the RCMP is investigating. In the WE Charity scandal, the Prime Minister took an action, by awarding money to the organization, that benefited himself and his family: his brother, his mother and his wife. As I said before, under subsection 119(1) of the Criminal Code, that is illegal. It is not just a mistake.

Therefore we really have to clean up the government, and it does not look to me like we can change the spots on the leopards. Over here on the Conservative benches, we believe in the rule of law. We believe in transparency. We believe in accountability and we believe in trying to be prudent with the use of taxpayer dollars for the benefit of all Canadians.

I think that Canadians are looking for a change. They cannot take the continual rise in taxes that they have seen under the current government, such as the carbon tax, which it is going to increase to 61¢ a litre at a time when people are already struggling. The Liberals want to quadruple it and quadruple the misery.

EI premiums, CPP premiums and all of these things are going in the wrong direction at a time when there is going to be increasing competitiveness from the U.S.; President-elect Trump has clearly put America as a priority, and we are not on competitive ground. We have taxes and a regulatory burden that are going to drive millions of dollars and millions of jobs to the U.S.

The Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund is the tip of the iceberg. We have to get to the bottom of it. As much as everybody would like to move on from this, until the documents are produced unredacted and we can give them to the RCMP so we can get to the bottom of what happened, the Conservatives are going to continue to do what is our job. We are His Majesty's loyal opposition, and our job is to hold the government to account, which means not just saying, "Oh, there's nothing to see here." It means asking for the documents, doing the hard work to get to the bottom of it and going to committees.

I understand that once the documents are produced, the PROC committee is supposed to look at them. However, I have a little bit of skepticism about that, because with every other scandal that has gone to any committee, NDP members, partners of the Liberals, work together with them. They are still doing it, even though the leader of the NDP made a big deal of ripping up the agreement, effectively saying, "Oh, the Liberals are too weak and they can't be trusted. We're not going work with them anymore."

The New Democrats are still supporting the Liberals today at committee. What they do is shut down the committee. They filibuster so they do not have to produce the documents, and that is exactly what would happen if this thing went to committee, which is

Privilege

why we have to hold on and wait until the Liberals deliver the documents.

Why will they not deliver the documents? The Auditor General has seen them, although she was not auditing criminality. The documents exist and need to be produced, but what are they hiding? Are people going to go to jail? That is what it is starting to look like. However, we will not know until we see the documents, so the Liberals need to produce them, the sooner the better.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, Carbon Pricing.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that the RCMP does not want the documents. I assume that it does not want to end up with information that should have required a warrant to obtain, which would undermine the investigation. We have seen that in court cases where, if the proper procedures are not followed, the whole case falls apart.

My question for the hon. member is this: Why are she and other members of the Conservative Party being so flippant about the risks of undermining a very serious and important investigation?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, because it gives me an opportunity to reiterate that the RCMP gets tips all the time. They get documents. They get people calling them in, suggesting that there is crime. They have a due diligence to go investigate that. If they do find evidence of that, then, if they want to use that as evidence in a court trial, they have to go to the judge and ask for a warrant.

There is a huge number of documents in the green slush fund, and the RCMP may not know exactly where to look. That is why we need to make sure they get all the documents so they do not have to go back and forth, and ask again and again. When the RCMP find the criminality, they will go for a warrant and officially request those documents, so they can be used in a criminal trial.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, for a month now, we have been given different arguments on why we cannot receive the documents. We are told that the RCMP has concerns about politicians interfering in the judicial branch. However, we are not ordering it to conduct an investigation. We are possibly providing it with potential evidence. Now we are being told that there is no search warrant. If someone has potential evidence of a crime and keeps it to themselves, they are an accomplice to that crime. A search warrant is not required for submitting potential evidence.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on these two subtle legal points. What are these new arguments all about?

Privilege

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right.

We can hand the documents over to the RCMP, that is not a problem. If the RCMP decides that a crime has been committed, it can officially request the documents and use them in court. It is a no-brainer. I do not know why the government does not want to hand over the documents, but there is definitely something it wants to hide.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, where we are is similar to the Afghan detainee documents that caused a problem here in this chamber.

With regards to procurement of documents in general, I am just wondering where the Conservative Party stands on Crown copyright, which would be more public access to documents that the public pays for. It is research, it is information, it is ministers' files and it is a whole bunch of studies; a series of different things that they did not agree to amend during the Harper tenure. Canada is an outlier with regards to the United States and other Commonwealth nations, because our Crown copyright goes back to the early 1900s.

I am wondering where the Conservatives stand on that, because allowing Canadians, businesses, the general public and academics access to these publicly paid for documents would end some of the stuff that we have here in the House. Where do the Conservatives stand on Crown copyright now that they are in opposition?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, during my speech I spoke about how we need to be competitive. With the digital age and the involvement of AI, there are a lot of things that we are going to have to look at.

Conservatives believe that we need to make Canada competitive in the world. We need to be leaders in technology. Those things will drive the kinds of decisions that the member is referring to.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, just yesterday in the public accounts committee, we heard that the government has referred three more cases, seven in total now, to the RCMP over theft issues and fraud issues with ArriveCAN. However, the government seems very hesitant to do so with a similar scandal.

In the contribution agreement signed between SDTC and Industry Canada, there is a very specific paragraph that states that for any money given out ineligibly, SDTC has an obligation to return the money to Industry Canada, therefore, taxpayers. However, SDTC has not, and Industry Canada has not, forced the issue.

I wonder if my colleague could perhaps expand on why she thinks the government is refusing to claw back ineligibly received taxpayers' dollars.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who is so excellent in the work that he does. He is so detail oriented, getting to the heart of the matter. In this example, there's \$58 million that the Auditor General said went to companies that were not eligible. They did not reduce emissions and it was not green tech. The companies were absolutely not eligible.

Regarding my colleague's comments, that money should be returned and the government should be going after it. However, the Liberals never get the money back. The Liberals waste Canadians' money. Their friends get rich and taxpayers never get their money back. We need a carbon tax election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is trying to sidestep the real issue of the motion. The motion is very simple. The Conservative Party is asking that Parliament, the House of Commons, provide unredacted documents directly to the RCMP. The RCMP has said that the game the Conservatives are playing is not right. The Auditor General of Canada has said that what the Conservative Party is doing is not right. We have other professionals who are saying the same thing. We cannot just give the papers over. There are quotes of people saying that there are potential threats to charter issues and yet, the Conservatives close their eyes, believing it is okay to demand it and ultimately mislead Canadians.

The government is not going to go against the RCMP and the Auditor General because the Conservatives believe something that is not true. Why should the government of the day believe the Conservative Party ahead of the RCMP and the Auditor General? Do the Conservatives not respect what those independent institutions are saying?

• (1700)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, the role of the RCMP is to enforce the rule of law equally for all. It is interesting to me how often the RCMP does not investigate things happening in the government that are suggested to be criminal, like what happened with the Prime Minister in the WE Charity scandal and like when Brenda Lucki kept information from the public on the Nova Scotia massacre because of an announcement with respect to gun legislation that was coming from the government.

There is not enough separation between the current Liberal government and the RCMP, and that is a concern. The RCMP needs to investigate all of the accused criminality. The whistle-blower said there was criminality and certainly I have outlined how the RCMP officers can look at that evidence the way they would if the whistle-blowers just called up the RCMP and told the officers where to go and look. That would be a great thing to do.

However, in lieu of that, this is what we as parliamentarians can do to make sure that the information gets there so that they can investigate. Perhaps the officers will find nothing. The RCMP can choose to do whatever it wants to do. If the RCMP officers do want to use it in a criminal prosecution, they will have to follow the law and get a warrant, but they will know where to look.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for their remarks and contributions to this debate. The very fact that we can debate here in this House on this matter is so important for Canadians. It is something that our veterans fought for. The right for civil debate is something that we must always cherish and hold with reverence equivalent to the sacrifice required to attain it. As we all wear our poppies this November, I want to thank the men and women who have served in our military and continue to serve our country in such a capacity.

The last time I was here in this House speaking to this issue, I was able to draw on much of my teaching experience to highlight just how important this motion is. This motion, which we all know by now, is concerning the government's refusal to provide all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, emails or any other correspondence engaged among government officials regarding SDTC or the NDP-Liberal government's green slush fund.

While I do not want to belabour the point of discussing how the government could learn lessons from high school students in finally coming clean to Canadians on yet another scandal, today I want to try to appeal to the government's better angels by asking them to make a decision. Today, I am asking the government, on behalf of the many parents and young, bright students of the future that I represent, to set a good example and once again come clean to Canadians on this scandal.

As the Prime Minister may remember, children look up to us adults for influence and inspiration and as role models. While it sometimes remains to be seen that this is the case, we are all indeed adults in this House. With the added responsibilities of being parliamentarians and elected representatives of our people, our nation, the bar only gets higher.

In search of role models, children look for those who lead by example and once again, the government has a choice to make. It can come clean with Canadians on this corruption-stricken slush fund and the lack of stewardship over taxpayers' dollars, or it can continue to allow our House to be frozen and in dysfunction in service of the Liberals' questionable political goals. They have a choice to place the sake of Canadians over themselves.

I am not ignorant to the reality that political parties of all stripes will attempt to paint their opponents in an unflattering manner. However, in this case, among many others, putting political interests over Canadians has become an absolute reality in what remains of the NDP-Liberal government. I intend to make this point here in this House today.

It is clear to Canadians, now more than ever, that the government has adopted a doctrine of, "Do as I say, not as I do." In 2015, the Liberal Party put out this message in campaigning efforts. It stated, "Canadians deserve an open, transparent government that will focus on their real priorities—economic growth that works for every-

Privilege

one." They also said, "Only Liberals have a plan for real change that will restore trust in our democracy, and ensure an open and transparent government."

After nine years of the government, trust in our democracy and the transparency of government has never been lower. Recent numbers show that at least six in 10 Canadians are not satisfied with the accountability and transparency of the Canadian government's spending practices. While polls are not gospel, I must ask those opposite, is this not the slightest bit concerning?

This theme extends beyond just the realm of this green slush fund. While NDP-Liberals pull out all of the stops to virtue-signal on how great their climate plan has been and how great it has been for Canadians, they have failed to hit a single emissions reduction target. According to the Auditor General, they are unlikely to hit their 2030 targets either.

• (1705)

There is something to be said for sticking to what one says one will do. It is a matter of integrity and, frankly, pride. However, I am routinely surprised by the lack of shame for its many shortfalls demonstrated by the government.

Of course, this all comes as the ever-present carbon tax continues to hurt Canadians at the pumps and at the grocery stores. As I described earlier, it is "do as I say, not as I do". It creates a clear double standard in which the government can do no wrong, but Liberals continue to attack industries in my home province of Alberta for easy political points with their ever-diminishing voter base.

The government's recently announced emissions cap for the oil and gas sector is a blatant attempt to strangle an industry that is, frankly, critical to Canada's economic prosperity and growth. The irony is that they continue to fail to hit their own emission targets while expecting provinces and industries within said provinces to now follow a new arbitrary production cap. How is that not a double standard?

Privilege

Recent data from Stats Canada shows that energy-rich Alberta contributed 38.2% to the overall natural resources GDP in 2022. Let it be known from coast to coast that Albertans take incredible pride in how we do energy. We excel in planning and executing reclamation processes to return the land we use back to how it looked and how it was used before development upon the land took place. The notion that Albertans are anti-environment is simply untrue and reeks of anti-Alberta prejudice. The ability to harness Canada's natural resources is truly a Canadian superpower; by extension, this makes Alberta an all-star. The energy sector is a massive contributor to employment in central Alberta, and applying a de facto emissions cap would be devastating to those employed in my riding.

I am a fourth-generation farmer. I work hard to represent fellow farmers here in the House. On top of that, the people of Red Deer—Mountain View have placed their trust in me as their elected representative to advocate for them and be their voice in Ottawa. Not only do I cherish this trust, but I will also fight for their interests as long as I have the honour of representing them in the House of Commons.

On that note, I want to shift my focus back to the government. I will turn my attention specifically to the hon. member opposite who sits as Canada's Minister of Environment. I do this because this individual announced the de facto production cap on our oil and gas sector, and while he has stated reasons of his own, I wish to highlight an alternative explanation, not only for this cap but also for the government's reluctance to disclose documents that would expose the corruption that has taken place.

If we were to open up the books and look at the environment minister's working history, we would see that he was a strategic adviser for more than 10 years at a Canadian fund dedicated to the development of clean technologies. One might say that sounds awfully familiar, given the matter that has seized the House for about a month now. What was SDTC? It was also a Canadian fund dedicated to the development of clean technologies, except that it was run by the federal government. While that is the case, it goes even deeper than that.

• (1710)

For those unfamiliar with the matter, one of the directors of this very fund found their way onto the board of SDTC. On top of that, this green slush fund has had a history of giving money to companies in the portfolio of the fund our environment minister used to work at.

The saying often goes that people in government should always strive to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. This is a means to ensure that faith and trust in our institutions remain strong. Therefore, it is bizarre that any person armed with a handy little tool called Google is able to find out that there are so many layers to the corruption we are attempting to uncover.

As members of Parliament, we represent our constituents; not only that, but we also represent ourselves. That is true. It is a fact of human nature. As I outlined before, I have no qualms telling people about where I come from, about the honest work I do on our beautiful farm in Red Deer County or about the interest I represent on behalf of those in my riding.

It seems such forthcomingness is not a characteristic shared by some of those who sit opposite from me and my colleagues. That is, of course, what we are discussing here today, and it leaves many questions unanswered. What other interests does the government hold that it continues to conveniently cover up for its own political gain? Once again, it is do as I say, not as I do.

This narrative has become tiring for everyone in Canada. That much is absolutely clear. Conservatives have been steadfast in our efforts to prosecute the government for its many shortcomings and dishonesties to Canadians; Canadians themselves are fed up and have had enough with the NDP-Liberal government. Both say that something needs to change.

When scholars look back at this tumultuous period within the Liberal caucus and the many uncertainties that have come with it, I worry that their takeaways will be less than charitable. Whatever happened to setting a good example for our children and teaching them the importance of accountability for one's actions? Whatever happened to showing one's homework when presenting proposals to chief executives? As a reminder, here in the House, the chief executives over all of us are the Canadian taxpayers who sent us here. Our responsibility is to them, to the people who pay for us to sit here in the House, but some twiddle their thumbs and pretend there is not a massive cover-up taking place here.

A carbon tax election is around the corner, but for now, the government is still hanging on. This is despite the fact that many Canadians across the political spectrum are telling the Prime Minister he is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

I will now move away from indicting the government's actions because I wish to appeal to the better angels here today. As many of my peers in the teaching profession and in the scholarly realm will often say, history is the best teacher. When we look back on history, there is an abundance of literature and cases showing that the truth always comes out in the end.

The truth prevails, no matter how powerful the efforts are to suppress it. The reality is that we see this in recent history, even in the past couple of decades. The truth, whether the government likes it or not, is going to come out sooner or later. As always, if someone has nothing to hide, why bother? On the flip side, if someone does have something to hide, they would be better off coming clean sooner rather than getting burned twofold when the truth comes to light without their hand in it.

Privilege

• (1715)

History is the best teacher, and as with all governments, sometime in the near future, the current government will become just that: history. When it does, as with all governments that come and go, it will be subject to the 20/20 vision that is hindsight and held to the level of scrutiny that it can grant. This is what we call legacy. Legacy is what we leave for the history books and the impact we leave on people once we have left them. What legacy does the Prime Minister want to be known for? What legacy do his colleagues wish for their government? Does the government wish for its legacy to be that it is better to hide mistakes and wrongdoings if it should suit its purposes?

As parliamentarians, we are not the masters but the servants. As I said before, our masters are the Canadian people, and our purposes should fall second to the needs of the Canadian people. They need a transparent and accountable government. Was that not the promise the Liberals gave those who voted for them in 2015? Is this going to be yet another broken promise by the government?

Now, more than ever, with trust in our institutions at an all-time low, we cannot afford this sort of tomfoolery. We need to ensure that Canadians can trust us to get things done and that our federal government does not fall into obscurity in the eyes of the Canadian public. It is not too late to right the ship in this instance and come clean to the people of Canada. Today, I hope this message resonates with my colleagues across the floor.

Another question I have for the government regarding its potential legacy is this: Do the government members wish to leave behind the lesson that taking on a sacred duty to their country as an elected representative is something that can be shrugged at and abused? A recurring theme in the government has been that of conflict of interest, time and time again.

Parliamentarians are entrusted with the sacred duty to represent the voices of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands. These voices should always supersede those of powerful corporations and investment funds. Common-sense Conservatives have been strongly against the presence of corporate lobbyists in our political process. We will always advocate that the best way for Canadians to influence their parliamentarians is to speak to them directly. The tables have turned. It is the people's time to be heard.

I have one last question: Does the government wish to teach future generations that it is okay to freeze the nation's legislature for more than a month, to shrink from accountability over hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars?

I hope every member opposite is able to ask these questions in private, as they look in the mirror after work today. After all, we are at work, and taxpayers have sent us here to advocate for their best interests. How withholding these documents serves Canadian taxpayers is beyond me.

As would the people I represent in Red Deer—Mountain View, I would appreciate a more genuine response than a simple non-answer. It is time for us, as the adults in the room, to take stock of where we are as a democracy and ensure that we are moving forward in a way that best reflects the views and values of the people of Canada. This is a chance for us to show Canadians we can still

get things done in this country for the good of all citizens. It was not always like this in Canada, and it will not be like this forever.

The winds of change are setting upon Canada, ready to transform our country once more, as all democracies observe. We are in a transformative time when many things are uncertain. While there still remains much that we are unsure of, such as what the future holds, one thing remains clear: Canadians deserve better.

• (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me challenge the member across the way, as he asks members of the Liberal caucus to look in the mirror. I will ask him to look at a story in *The Hill Times* from October 31 written by Steven Chaplin, a former senior legal counsel in the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel. It is a reflection on the behaviour taking place. It states, "It is time for the House to admit its overreach before the matter inevitably finds its way to the courts which do have the ability to determine and limit the House's powers, often beyond what the House may like."

Let there be no doubt that this is a power play by the leader of the Conservative Party, who, I would argue, could be held in contempt because of the methods being used in the chamber, or maybe not him directly but his caucus. At the end of the day, we are being asked to provide unredacted documents directly to the RCMP, which the RCMP, the Auditor General of Canada and others have said is not appropriate. Who is right, the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting comment from the member opposite.

This came from the Speaker. We know what happened the last time the Liberals chose not to give information to the Speaker. They took him to court. The question is, by whom are the games being played? We know what happened before when the government did not want to produce papers.

I am sure many people have different views, but the point is that it is the Speaker who asked for this, and that is what the Conservatives will ensure is going to happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question is very straightforward. Right now, in Parliament, absolutely nothing is happening and everything is at a standstill. In my colleague's opinion, who has something to gain from the current situation? Who is benefiting from it?

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, as we mentioned before, when dealing with conflicts of interest, there comes a time when one has to make a stand. That is what I see has taken place. The Speaker took a stand and said what had to happen. That is an important aspect of where we are at the moment.

Privilege

It is difficult to keep track of the various scandals taking place. It is one thing to go back over the list, which, as someone mentioned earlier today, would take up pretty well the main part of a speech, but this is about the scandals in the hopper at this point in time, and there are more, it seems, each and every day.

• (1725)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am hearing that Canadians across the country are bewildered and want us to continue the important work they elected us to do in representing them. There are so many things Canadians need us to talk about, but instead we are hearing the same things over and over again. I would love to see this go to committee so we can dig into it and find some solutions.

We hear what the Conservatives are saying over and over again about Liberal insiders. I find that interesting because we know that SDTC's Annette Verschuren, which I have said before, has donated tens of thousands of dollars to both the Conservatives and the Liberals. We also know that she was an adviser to Mulroney while he was in power.

Should the Conservatives not be talking about the Liberal and Conservative insiders instead of just the Liberal insiders?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I think the last time I spoke, there was a similar question. Of course, it is easy to say tens of thousands, but it is not that amount as far as the Conservatives are concerned. As we know, Navdeep Bains worked his way around the proper procedures for determining who would be the chairperson of SDTC, so it goes a lot deeper than that. As for the donations she made, they were for people who were friends of hers, not friends of the government.

At any rate, when I look at the actions of the Liberals in this case, it would be nice if the NDP's leadership could put pressure on the Liberals. We hear members say the situation would be easy once it gets to committee, but many of us have spent time in committee and understand that is not the case.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think Canadians are astonished. We had a new board chair of SDTC, and the answers the public want to know deal with governance. The hon. member has a successful farm. He was successful in education too, and with education, of course, comes governance. We saw a lack of responsibility and accountability, with 186 conflicts of interest from the board since 2017. That is the issue. SDTC was a pretty good company until about late 2016 to 2017.

What does the minister think about the governance issues or lack thereof?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not know that the member is a minister at this point, but I will ask him to respond.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, that is certainly something to aspire to.

Some \$58 million went to companies that were not eligible, and this money must come back. There is always a question about whether this came from a board member. That is where the conflict of interest comes from. Still, there is the other side of it about

things having nothing to do with SDTC. It is very similar, as we heard earlier today, to the discussion about the minister from Alberta and the issues that his company had with claiming that it was an indigenous company. Great pains were taken to say certain people did not get any money. That is true, but that does not mean they did not apply.

• (1730)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the RCMP has said that it does not need or want the documents in question. The Speaker has strongly suggested that the proper course is to go to committee and not hand parliamentary documents over to a third party.

To the hon. member, who must be getting very tired of the storyline, what is wrong with just following the advice of the RCMP and the Speaker?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, as the member from the Liberal Party mentioned, they are concerned. They believe that it would be nice to move on. If the documents get into the hands of an outside group, it could be years before we get to the bottom of what is taking place. When we ask for documents here, it is an opportunity for the truth to come out as soon as possible. That is important, and I believe it is something Canadians are asking for.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, at a time when Canadians are struggling to put food on their tables, when the dream of home ownership in Canada is just that, a dream for many young Canadians, and when our country is plagued by so many other serious challenges brought upon us by the failed policies of this incompetent and reckless NDP-Liberal government, here we are again this afternoon continuing debate on the government's failure to live up to its responsibilities and the Speaker's order to produce important documents pertaining to the Sustainable Development Technology Canada green slush fund scandal. In fact, this is my second time speaking to this important issue.

Today, I am here debating the amendment that would replace the reporting date of Friday, November 22, with the following: "the 30th sitting day following the adoption of this order". This change makes sense given the uncertainty around when debate on this important issue will finish. No one knows for sure when that will be, but the Conservatives are doing our part in holding this corrupt Liberal government to account until it hands over the ordered and unredacted SDTC documents to the RCMP.

While Friday, November 22, sounds far away, it is in fact just around the corner when we consider that Remembrance Day is on Monday, and next week all members of Parliament will be in their constituencies catching up with their constituents, local stakeholders and their families. By the time we return to this place, it will be November 18, and November 22 is that Friday.

When November 22 was first proposed in the motion, no one could have imagined we would be continuing to debate this issue in the House of Commons. Back then, it sounded like a reasonable and realistic date to set as a deadline. However, the Liberal government has dug in its heels and is refusing to budge. That is how Canadians watching from home know that the Liberals are hiding something, and that something must be very concerning. That is why we are here today to hold this corrupt government to account.

It dismays me greatly that since the first time I debated this subject a few weeks ago, the Liberals have still not done what is right and handed over the ordered and unredacted SDTC documents to the RCMP. Consequently, the House of Commons remains seized by this issue and paralyzed from moving on from it.

For those watching at home, I will note that SDTC was established by the Government of Canada in 2001. As a federally funded foundation, it was responsible for the approval and disbursement of over \$100 million annually in taxpayer funds to help Canadian companies develop and deploy sustainable technologies. For many years, SDTC operated responsibly and earned a generally good reputation for its work. However, that all changed in 2019 when former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains appointed Annette Verschuren as chair of SDTC. The issue at hand was a matter of conflict of interest. Verschuren was an entrepreneur who was already receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies, and then she was appointed by the NDP-Liberal government to hold responsibilities in overseeing the very same SDTC funds that her company was receiving.

That fact alone should have sounded alarm bells and set off flashing red lights to alert everyone in the government about the obvious conflict of interest at hand. In fact, it was no secret. The minister, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office all knew, and they were warned of the risks associated with appointing a conflicted chair. However, those warnings fell on deaf ears and there was indifference, as Verschuren was appointed by the Liberal minister anyway. How can we tell that a government has lost its moral compass? It is when it makes poor decisions like this one without concern for doing the right things and without fear of consequence.

Only two years later, in January 2021, Minister Bains announced that he had decided to step away from politics and not run again in the upcoming federal election. That same year, SDTC entered into a five-year, \$1-billion agreement with the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. Fast-forward to the fall of 2024, and it is clear that the Liberals are trying desperately to run away and wash their hands of this mess, one they laid the foundation for through their own actions, and especially after the Auditor General released a scathing report about SDTC in June 2024.

• (1735)

The AG found massive issues at SDTC, which resulted in the current Minister of Industry, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, abolishing the SDTC and immediately transferring its funds over to the National Research Council of Canada. These are truly astonishing developments in just three years for something the Liberal government does not want to talk about anymore.

Privilege

What did the AG find that was so bad to cause all this carnage? In June 2024, the AG found that SDTC demonstrated “significant lapses in governance and stewardship of public funds”. Nearly 20% of the SDTC projects examined by the AG were in fact ineligible, based on the government's own rules for funding, with a total price tag of \$59 million. There were also 90 instances where the SDTC ignored conflict of interest provisions while awarding \$76 million to various projects. Indeed, the AG found 63 cases where SDTC agency directors voted in favour of payments to companies in which they declared interests. Further, there were serious matters of governance, including the fact that the board did not have the minimum number of members required by law.

The report concluded: “Not managing conflicts of interest—whether real, perceived, or potential—increases the risk that an individual's duty to act in the best interests of the foundation is affected, particularly when making decisions to award funding.” It also blamed the government's Minister of Industry, whose ministry did not sufficiently monitor the contribution agreements with SDTC.

Believe it or not, it gets far worse. Since June, the Auditor General found that directors had awarded funding to projects that were ineligible and where conflicts of interest existed. Over \$300 million in taxpayer money was paid out in over 180 cases where there was a potential conflict of interest, with Liberal-appointed directors funneling money to companies they owned.

Time after time, this Liberal government and its Prime Minister have shown total contempt for Canada's ethics laws. In fact, the Prime Minister himself has been the subject of three ethics investigations and was found guilty of breaking ethics laws twice. The Liberal government allows the culture of law-breaking to persist, as six Liberals have been found guilty of breaking ethics laws. Liberals have gone through these ethical scandals before. That is why they are withholding these documents, breaching parliamentary privilege and trying desperately to sweep this mess under the rug and move on to the next thing. However, common-sense Conservatives are not going to let them get away with it.

Privilege

The Conservatives are holding the corrupt NDP-Liberal government to account. It will be held responsible for its carelessness, recklessness and corruption. This is why, on June 10, 2024, the House of Commons adopted the following motion proposed by common-sense Conservatives on this matter. The motion read:

That the House order the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) and the Auditor General of Canada each to deposit with the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, within 30 days of the adoption of this order, the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017, which are in its or her possession, custody or control.

The motion then details what documents were to be supplied and then directed that “the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.”

This common-sense Conservative motion passed with the support of the New Democrats, Green Party and Bloc Québécois. Only the Liberals opposed it. To be clear, nothing in the motion orders the RCMP to conduct an investigation. The House is simply asking that the documents be turned over to the RCMP.

Thirty days came and went, and instead of complying with the adopted motion, federal departments outright refused the House order or provided heavily redacted documents, citing provisions in the Privacy Act or the Access to Information Act. This is not a good look. Nothing in the House order contemplated redactions to documents being made by the government. The House of Commons enjoys the absolute and unfettered power to order the production of documents, which is not limited by statute. These powers are rooted in the Constitution Act of 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act.

In response to the NDP-Liberal government's failure to produce these documents, the Conservative House leader raised a question of privilege, rightfully arguing that the House privilege had been breached due to the failure to comply with the House order.

● (1740)

On September 26, the Speaker issued a ruling on the question of privilege raised and found the privileges of the House had in fact been breached. Now, nearly a month later, we continue our important debate on this matter today and continue our demands for the Liberal government to provide the RCMP with the unredacted SDTC documents. The Speaker has ruled the government has violated a House order to turn over evidence to the RCMP in its latest \$400 million green slush fund scandal.

The NDP-Liberal government's refusal to respect the ruling has paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside all other work to address issues such as the cruel and crippling carbon tax, the cost of living crisis that Canadians face for food and shelter, and the increasing crime, disorder and chaos in our streets and in our communities and cities.

This is happening at a time when the costs of food, fuel and shelter are all up and millions of Canadians are having to line up outside food banks just to survive. Sadly, as Canadians continue to struggle, life for well-connected Liberals and insiders has never been so good.

One of the drivers of this hardship is the cruel NDP-Liberal carbon tax. In fact, this carbon tax will cost the average Ontarian \$903

this year. This is completely unacceptable to the constituents in my communities of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, who work hard for their money, who save carefully for their futures and who dream of a better tomorrow.

Instead of doing anything about climate change, the NDP-Liberal carbon tax is impoverishing Canadians. Recently, the PBO confirmed Canadians will suffer a net cost, paying more in the carbon tax than they will ever get back in rebates. Unfortunately, the NDP-Liberal government does not care. Instead of giving Canadians the tax relief they deserve, they hiked the carbon tax by 23% last spring as part of their plan to quadruple the carbon tax by 2030. It turns out the carbon tax is not a tool to fight climate change like the Prime Minister argues; it is just another tax grab. Canadians can add it to the long and growing list of Liberal-NDP taxes they already pay including the income tax, sales tax, excise tax, underused housing tax, property tax, capital gains tax and more.

After listing all those taxes, it is easy to see why Canadians are getting poorer. It is because the government is taking more of their hard-earned money away. The SDTC scandal is also happening at a time when the cost of food is up. In fact, food will cost families \$700 more this year than it did in 2023. That is because when we tax the farmer who grows the food; the trucker who ships the food; and the store that stocks, stores and sells the food, we end up taxing the family who buys the food.

As Sylvain Charlebois, Canada's “food professor”, who serves as director of Dalhousie University's agri-food analytics lab has said that the costly NDP-Liberal carbon tax “likely adds a significant cost burden to the Canadian food industry.” When it comes to food, Canadians are going hungry. That is evident by the massive surge in demand and need for food banks. Food bank usage has increased every year the NDP-Liberal government has been in office, because its inflationary spending and punishing carbon tax have hiked up the price of groceries, causing Canadians to skip meals, eat less healthy food and rely on food banks to survive.

This was confirmed recently by Feed Ontario, which revealed that a record “one million people visited a food bank in Ontario” in 2024. This is a dramatic increase of 25% from the previous year. In fact, Feed Ontario's CEO told media, “I never thought I would see this day.” Feed Ontario's CEO went on to say, “I've been with the organization for almost 15 years.... I never thought we would reach a number so high....” The CEO could not believe that we reached a point where numbers were so drastically high.

Across Canada, food banks reported earlier this year that they had seen a 50% increase in visits since 2021, with food banks handling a record two million visits in a single month in 2023. Of the people visiting food banks in Ontario, one in three visitors are children. One in six adults visiting food banks are unemployed. The NDP-Liberal government cost of living crisis has become so severe that even working Canadians are having to depend on food banks to get by. These numbers also reflect what is happening across Niagara.

• (1745)

We can try to wrap our heads around some of these statistics from Project Share, which serves vulnerable residents in Niagara Falls. Last year, Project Share saw a 20% increase in people served, compared to the previous year. There were 4,740 people who accessed its services for the first time. On average, 120 families per day access its essential support services. There were 13,995 people served last year, which equates to one in seven residents of Niagara Falls having accessed its essential support services.

We should be debating these issues, and we could if the government simply abided by the Speaker's ruling and provided the documents the House requested. Why are government members so hesitant to do what is right? Is it that they do not want to speak to the situation facing young Canadians and first-time homebuyers, which is so bad that the Canadian dream of home ownership is dying? Two-thirds of young people believe they will never be able to afford a home.

Canadians see this housing crisis most tragically in our streets, where there are now 1,800 homeless encampments across Ontario and thousands more across the country. Time after time, the NDP-Liberal government has promised to fix the housing crisis, but the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been clear that the number of new homes being built is not enough to reduce the existing supply gap and improve affordability for Canadians.

Crime is also getting worse under the watch of the NDP-Liberal government, and perhaps again this is why it refuses to hand over these documents, so we cannot debate these issues that are so important to all constituents.

Since 2015 when the Liberals formed government, the number of auto thefts skyrocketed by 45%, violent crime has increased 50%, human trafficking is up 73% and hate crimes have increased by 251%. Just recently, the Toronto Police Association had to come out publicly and fact-check the Prime Minister.

The reality is the Liberals' soft-on-crime approach is making life easier for violent criminals by repealing mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes with Bill C-5, making it easier to get bail with Bill C-75 and failing to stop the flow of illegal guns across the U.S. border.

These issues I noted are all pressing issues parliamentarians should be debating, but the House of Commons is seized because the government is refusing to comply with the House order to hand over SDTC documents to the RCMP.

Privilege

Canadians are suffering great hardship after nine years of the NDP-Liberal coalition. The country is headed in the wrong direction, and we are all worse off than we were 10 years ago.

The Speaker has ruled that the government has violated a House order to turn over evidence to the RCMP about its latest Liberal \$400-million green slush fund scandal. The Liberal government's refusal to respect the ruling has paralyzed Parliament, which is pushing aside all other debate. It is time for the Liberals to end their corrupt cover-up and provide the ordered documents to the police so Parliament can get back to work and Canadians can have the accountability they so rightly deserve.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned it is Veterans' Week. I am proudly the member who represents CFB Galetown and also one of the largest veteran populations across the country. I am certainly eternally grateful for those who serve and have protected our freedoms and democracy in this place.

I know the member respects veterans and those who have served. I wonder if he also respects the men and women who protect us here at home, namely the RCMP. The RCMP commissioner has said, "There is significant risk that the motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes and Charter protections." Is the assertion that the commissioner does not know what he is talking about?

• (1750)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, with Veterans' Week coming up, I want to thank all those who have served and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Lest we forget.

Instead of talking about the government complying with this order and providing the documents, we should be talking about issues such as homelessness and individuals going to the food bank. It is sad to see the number of veterans going to food banks has increased. That is a shame. The government can simply end this tomorrow. We can get back to the important issues we should be debating, and yet the government refuses to comply with the Speaker's order, which is a shame.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, here are a couple of my favourite adages: Two heads are better than one, and opposing for the sake of opposing is not constructive, especially when one is responsible for managing public assets.

Privilege

I can assure the House that I will never be in government. However, if I were, I would want to know what was not working. I would work with others to improve whatever was going wrong, because that is the responsible and dignified thing to do. We are all elected and we all represent our constituents, not just the ones who voted for us, but also those who voted against us. We must represent them with dignity. That being the case, I find it hard to understand why the government refuses to hand over the documents. This would allow it to ensure, not as a government, but as a manager of funds, that all funds are being used properly.

I would like my colleague to comment on that and on the importance of transparent collaboration between the parties for the common good of the people.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, it is important. When my colleague talks about transparency and the government listening to the advice, first of all, this all could have been avoided. When we go back to the appointment of the chair of the foundation, we find that the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office and even individuals from the foundation indicated the chair of the board was in a conflict of interest. Still, the government proceeded, which allowed this \$400-million fiasco to occur. How about the government takes responsibility? It cannot walk away from its responsibility. It caused this issue.

Can members imagine what we could have with \$400 million in our communities? We are building a brand new hospital in my community. That is \$400 million right there.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I also want to do a quick acknowledgement, with Remembrance Day coming up on November 11, of the local veterans and frontline workers who have done so much for our country. In particular, I want to acknowledge the legions in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, branches 256, 257 and 10, for all the work they do for our communities.

My question is coming from a genuine place. We have all heard the ruling from the Speaker, and I genuinely want to understand because I want to get back to talking about the important things Canadians want us to be talking about, like the cost of living, housing and the toxic substance crisis. I could go on.

Can the member clarify the ruling from the Speaker? My understanding is that he asked for it to go to committee, for us to get to the bottom of it. Can he clarify if he also has read that same ruling and if, perhaps, there is another interpretation of what was said?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, in my speech, I read what the motion indicated. It said:

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

The motion then detailed that it go to the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, who “shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police”.

• (1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if it would be possible to have the Table provide the member a copy of the Speaker's motion that we are supposed to be—

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

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: That is not a point of order, and I mentioned it in my—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I already indicated to the member it is not a point of order. The hon. member will have an opportunity for more questions and comments, if he wishes to answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would highly recommend that the member actually read the amendment. Both the questions from my Liberal colleague and the New Democrats were very genuine, and it was interesting how he sidestepped them completely. He is a pretty smart guy. Surely to goodness he recognizes that the leader of the Conservative Party is actually playing a multi-million dollar political game that is purely self-serving to the leader's interests and the interests of the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives cannot answer legitimate questions because they know they are wrong. They try to say it is the government, but shame on them because the fault lies within the Conservative Party. Why not just allow the issue to go to committee? That is what the motion is suggesting. The Conservatives, on the other hand, want to play their multi-million dollar silly game when the RCMP, the Auditor General and the Speaker's direct ruling on the matter say that is what should be taking place. Let us have this debate but let us do it in the procedure and House affairs committee.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, the Speaker ruled that the privileges of the House had been breached by the government's failure to produce those documents. This could end tomorrow. All the government has to do is produce those documents. We are not asking for the RCMP to make rulings. We are asking for those documents be provided to the RCMP. It would then be up to the RCMP to determine what to do with anything going forward.

We should be talking about other issues, such as what that \$400 million could be used for. One in seven residents in my community of Niagara Falls is visiting a food bank. What could that \$400 million do to assist members of my community? That is what we should be talking about. The government's refusal to comply with the Speaker's order is what we should not be talking about. The government should be listening to the Speaker's order, and we should be moving on to issues that impact our community.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is obvious why we are having this debate. We brought this forward in June and, five months later, the government has still not brought the documents out. I will tell members why the government does not want to have the unredacted documents. It does not have an agenda. Its members are happy to sit, day after day, talking about this. They have no political agenda and have simply run out of ideas. When they run out of ideas, they sit and waste time.

We, the opposition, brought this up, as members well know, in June. Five months later, we are still talking about it. The Liberals are happy to go on for another five months because they have no political agenda. They are wiped out for ideas with respect to this country.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The government is not willing to proceed on other issues. It has no further agenda items. It is a government that has lost its way.

Do members know that SDTC has the ability to go and get that \$400 million? Why has it not gone back to get that money back for the taxpayers of Canada? That money could be going to support the people who need it most in our communities. The government refuses to do it, and that is a shame for all of us.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

November 7, 2024

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 7th day of November, 2024, at 5:06 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop

Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance and repair)—Chapter 26; Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability)—Chapter 27; Bill C-284, An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care—Chapter 28; S-16, An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation—Chapter 29.

Privilege

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1800)

[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. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today, in advance of Remembrance Day. At this opportunity, I would like to mention that my grandfather Jesse Pullin served in England during the First World War. He immigrated to Canada with his family, his wife and my mother and her sister, in 1925.

Then, because of his devotion to England initially and then to Canada, he actually went back and fought in the Second World War for Canada. He fought two different world wars for two different countries. I am very proud of him and of the honour he instilled in me.

Just imagine what \$400 million could have done if it had made its way into the hands of hard-working Canadians who work day in and day out to bring home powerful paycheques. I start with that because it is the thought I want everyone to focus on as we continue the debate on the motion of privilege.

It is an honour to rise today as the representative of the good people of the North Okanagan—Shuswap. They go to work day in and day out trying to bring home paycheques that will get them a comfortable home, feed their family, keep the heat on and, with any luck, allow them to save up for their retirement.

I proudly rise to speak today on the issue of the question of privilege raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. For those Canadians who may be unclear as to why we are still debating the question of privilege, I will once again give a condensed history of the situation. I will quote my hon. colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets for the initial information, because he has been diligently digging up the breaches in conflict of interest on the file:

There is a foundation set up in 2001 called Sustainable Development Technology Canada, with the purpose of providing taxpayer financial assistance to green technology companies before they are commercialized. Since the government was elected, the foundation has received a billion dollars of taxpayer money. The result of probing by parliamentary committees is that we found that in 82% of the funding transactions approved by the board of directors during a five-year sample period that the Auditor General looked at, 82% of those transactions were conflicted.

Privilege

On September 16, my colleague the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle rose on a question of privilege, following notice under Standing Order 48, concerning the failure of the government to comply with the order that the House adopted on Monday, June 10. A majority of the House voted that day, June 10, to compel the government to produce a series of unredacted records concerning Sustainable Development Technology Canada, now known as the green slush fund, a body engulfed in one of the worst Liberal scandals in recent years. I say “one of the worst” because there have been many.

On September 26, six weeks ago, the hon. Speaker presented his ruling on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. The ruling said:

The procedural precedents and authorities are abundantly clear. The House has the undoubted right to order the production of any and all documents from any entity or individual it deems necessary to carry out its duties. Moreover, these powers are a settled matter, at least as far as the House is concerned. They have been confirmed and reconfirmed by my immediate predecessors, as well as those more distantly removed.

The Speaker further stated:

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

● (1805)

Here we are today, six weeks after the Speaker's ruling, debating the same motion, and the amendments to it, that the government produce the documents. It has thus far refused to provide them to the House. All other legislative debate has been halted until the Prime Minister and his government acknowledge the will of the majority of the members of the House that the documents be turned over. Time and again, member after member around the chamber has stated it: All that is required is to just produce the documents.

I have provided a condensed history of how we got to where we are today; it is now up to the Prime Minister to decide how we get through today, tomorrow and however many tomorrows it takes to break this impasse. After all these weeks of defiance, Canadians are asking what is so damaging in these documents that the government would put all other legislative process aside in an attempt to cover up what they contain. How bad could it be?

Could it be that the \$400 million in question would have been better spent if it had reached the hands of those hard-working Canadians I opened with, instead of being used to line the pockets of Liberal insiders? Could it be so bad that the Prime Minister cannot find anyone else to throw under the wheels of the bus except himself or a close friend, so he is choosing to throw our democratic process and the purpose of this chamber under the bus instead?

We can imagine what could have been accomplished if the \$400 million of this green slush fund had been allocated in a manner that helped Canadians and the communities they call home. Instead of creating yet another scandal, the Liberal-NDP government could have literally saved lives. Investing \$400 million in addictions treatment could have saved lives in the ongoing opioid crisis that claimed at least 47,162 lives in Canada between June 2016 and this March. Under the current government, more Canadians have lost their lives to the opioid crisis than were lost in World War II combat. A total of 14,260, or 30% of those lives, were lost in my home province of British Columbia, including lives lost in my constituen-

cy of North Okanagan—Shuswap. These dark realities are a very important reason that the government must release the unredacted documents and let the green slush fund scandal be investigated.

When I am connecting with citizens of North Okanagan—Shuswap and I hear them talk about the needs and priorities of their communities, I do not just listen; I carry their voices to Ottawa to advocate on their behalf. I have repeatedly written to the Minister of Finance to convey the need for the government to initiate actions to fight the availability of illicit opioids and non-prescribed controlled opioids. I repeatedly wrote and advocated for federal resources to prevent opioid addictions and to assist those who are attempting to overcome addiction. I never heard back from the minister or the government. We know who did hear back: the characters who doled out \$400 million in the green slush fund scandal. The Liberal-NDP government seems to have unlimited dollars for its friends, but it will not even respond to the pleas from elected representatives of Canadians. That \$400 million could have saved the lives of many Canadians lost to the opioid crisis, as well as preventing so much pain and the grief of parents, families and loved ones.

Canada's housing crisis has also played out in North Okanagan—Shuswap. This is another burning issue that I have repeatedly conveyed to the government, which is more concerned with helping its friends than with helping Canadians.

● (1810)

For instance, eight years ago, in 2016, I hosted round tables in North Okanagan—Shuswap to discuss the matter of housing with representatives from local governments, first nations, social services, construction, real estate and organizations assisting Canadians facing challenges in securing housing. Following these engagements, I wrote to the finance minister and shared great opportunities for the government to recognize the existing willingness of private investors and developers to construct new rental stock and to mobilize this willingness with reasonable incentives.

I wrote the minister again in 2018 and stated, “Many...Canadians below or near the poverty line exhibit determination to work hard to improve their positions but the absence of affordable housing undermines their aspirations and efforts.” Again, I received no response.

This government did not take up the actions suggested. Its response was inaction, and it actually made the housing crisis worse by driving up costs, rents, and housing and rental stock scarcity with out-of-touch policies.

Privilege

That \$400 million could have gone a long way in helping to unleash construction of new homes for Canadians; instead, it was allocated to the shady insider dealings of the green slush fund scandal, which the government must stop covering up. It could have provided Canadians with water security, had the money been allocated for water and waste water treatment systems, which I have repeatedly advocated for to the government over the years.

In 2017, I wrote the finance minister on behalf of the Skwłāx te Secwepemcúlcw, or Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band, which had identified to me the need for \$300,000. This was required to extend water service for up to 20 homes. At that time, I also raised the needs of the Splatsin First Nation for a sanitary sewage system for homes that were, on average, 40 years old and lacked access to treatment services. I told the minister how the reserve was subject to regular boil water advisories and needed support from Ottawa to establish a waste water treatment plant. The minister never did respond.

In the same correspondence, I advocated on behalf of the Okanagan Indian Band, which also required support to establish water and waste water treatment systems to meet the government's requirements. Over the years, I have also delivered urgent requests to the government to support water and waste water treatment systems for the Neskonlith Indian Band, the Adams Lake Indian Band, the City of Salmon Arm, the Village of Chase and the communities of Falkland, Scotch Creek, the North Shuswap, Sorrento, Blind Bay and the South Shuswap.

Again, I never received a response saying that the government had resources for these essential projects. Again, friends of the Liberal-NDP government over at the green slush fund did receive a response. They heard back from the government, and they received \$400 million. Self-interest and political interest eclipsed the needs of these communities, which needed support to protect their community, their health and our waters. This is another reason we are here today, calling on the government to release unredacted documents, finally, so that the \$400-million green slush fund can finally be investigated.

Over the years, I have also conveyed to the government many other needs and priorities of North Okanagan—Shuswap that could have been supported with the \$400 million that needs to be investigated in the green slush fund. In 2016, I sought government support for the \$5 million required to connect the communities of Seymour Arm and Shuswap Lake to hydroelectric service.

● (1815)

In the same year, I identified the need for federal support for assessments of biofuels and renewable energy in the Sicamous area and biomass heating systems in Enderby. In 2018, I advocated for support for a natural gas line to supply the Adams Lake and Little Shuswap Lake indigenous communities. All of these projects could have delivered benefits for citizens and communities. The government did not respond to my advocacy with support, but it did make sure there was \$400 million for the green slush fund.

Since 2016, I have been pleading with the government to prioritize the removal of unexploded explosive ordnance, or UXO, from the lands of the Okanagan Indian Band. UXO are a lingering legacy of wartime training ranges on the lands of the Okanagan. Economic

development, and the jobs and prosperity that economic development could bring, continues to be stymied because the government has not ensured the UXO are cleared.

Just this morning, I received correspondence from the Okanagan Indian Band administration on this very issue, which persists because the government has not prioritized resolving the matter. This is yet another example of what good could have been achieved if \$400 million had not been sent to the green slush fund.

Canadians have no choice but to pay taxes. Canadians deserve to know what their tax dollars are being spent on and to have those tax dollars spent in a manner that results in equitable, meaningful benefits. The Liberal government and its NDP accomplices continue to deny Canadians transparency and value for spending. My Conservative colleagues and I will continue to fight to expose what happened to the \$400 million that clearly should have been allocated for the benefit of Canadians, not the benefit of insiders.

As I have said before, parliamentarians, at least on this side of the House, take their roles very seriously. Members of His Majesty's loyal opposition have a job to do, and that is to hold the government of the day accountable. It is part of making sure the people back home in North Okanagan—Shuswap, and across Canada, get to bring home the paycheques they work so hard to earn.

I want to take us back a few years to 2013, when this was stated:

Political leadership is about raising the bar on openness and transparency...

As a Member of Parliament, as a Leadership Candidate, and now as Leader of my Party, I have taken every opportunity to raise the bar when it comes to openness and accountability.... As Leader of my Party, I made raising the bar on transparency and openness my first major policy announcement, so that Canadians can better hold their leaders accountable.

For me, transparency isn't a slogan or a tactic; it's a way of doing business. I trust Canadians. I value their opinions. And now that I've heard them, I'm going to act.

That statement came from the current Prime Minister. It is a far cry from what we are seeing right now, where transparency is nowhere to be found. He did say sunlight is the best disinfectant, I believe.

Why would the Liberals continually be involved in conflicts of interest and scandals? It is simple: They are Liberals. That is why they continue to be found in breaches of ethics. They must be held accountable. They must turn over the documents as ordered by the House. Canada will be better off for it.

Privilege

I will close with the same message I opened with: \$400 million. Members can imagine what could have been done if it had been put into the hands of hard-working Canadians who work, day in and day out, trying to bring home powerful paycheques.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I, too, want to get off topic. I could talk about the leader of the Conservative Party and his association with Stephen Harper as his parliamentary secretary, and really the point man of the Stephen Harper government.

I have a book here that talks about Stephen Harper's serial abuse of power, scandals and corruption. I did not write the book, but there is a book on it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member is not to use props in the House. He can read from the book, but he cannot mention the book.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there are too many scandals and abuses of power for me to read it.

However, I can tell the member that the real issue here is that now we have the leader of the Conservative Party who is actually borderline in contempt of the House of Parliament, I would argue, for what he is doing. He is holding the House of Commons hostage and not allowing things to be debated. It is no surprise that he was parliamentary secretary to the prime minister when Stephen Harper was held in contempt of Parliament; the only prime minister in the history of Canada and the British Commonwealth to be held in contempt of Parliament. Also, he now refuses to get the security clearance. There was a litany of abuses of power. Why should Canadians believe there is any genuineness in regards to this issue with the Conservative Party? They are part of the problem—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I truly enjoy debating with this member for Winnipeg North, because he is so easy to counter-attack. Why does he continuously distract and deflect?

We are here, and we have been here for weeks now, debating one issue, which is an order by the majority of the members of the House to produce documents. It is one issue, and yet he continuously tries to distract, delay and deflect to protect his corrupt government and his corrupt Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us look at this. First we heard about WE Charity, and then we heard about the \$237 million that was given to a couple of guys who started a business just 10 days before they were awarded the contract and who were unable to deliver even half of what they were asked for. Next, we heard about non-indigenous companies passing themselves off as indigenous in order to get contracts. That is not counting the fact that there are probably a whole lot of other things that we do not know about yet, some well-kept secrets and some secrets that will soon come to light.

If we take all that together, it makes me wonder whether the real problem is the government's inability to manage public funds properly. When we look more closely, we see that there are still governments within the government. When it comes to governance in the sense of an overarching power, it seems to be a system, a shadowy web. Could the real problem be that, regardless of the government's political stripe, there are too many sub-governments in the big machine that is Ottawa?

• (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member from the Bloc. It is not very often that Conservatives and the Bloc agree on an issue, but this is one case where we do agree.

This government certainly cannot manage anything. We have seen what the Liberals have done with the finances of the country. Housing costs have doubled. Rent has doubled. Grocery costs have gone through the roof. People cannot afford to live because of the mismanagement of this government. I agree with the Bloc, we need a change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is funny, but at the end of his speech, my colleague started talking about the concerns of ordinary folks, workers and their families: the housing crisis, the cost of living, the cost of groceries. His party is paralyzing the work of the House, when we should be able to talk about those concerns and work together on finding solutions. I find that a bit odd.

I understand that the issue we are currently debating is also important, but the Conservative Party is causing us to waste millions of dollars in public funds by paralyzing the work of the House and keeping us from talking about the issues that directly affect the lives of Quebeckers and Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, that was an interesting question from the member, since the NDP has been shoring up the corrupt government for the last number of years. Its policies have added to inflation and government debt to an endless degree, and the member says we are wasting dollars. We are simply holding the government to account for its waste of taxpayer dollars.

This could have been over within a day if the government had heeded the ruling of the majority of the House to produce the documents. Who is really wasting taxpayer dollars? I say it is the NDP-Liberal government on that side of the House.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for such a powerful speech about his role and duty as a member of Parliament since 2015 and for all of the advocacy he has done for his constituents, including the most vulnerable among them.

Privilege

I wonder if he has more to say about the advocacy he has done for the essential needs of indigenous people and indigenous communities. What does he think about, as he just said, the Liberals being propped up by the NDP, who claim that the most important relationship to them is the one with indigenous people? He has explained his own advocacy as a representative of indigenous people in his riding, but that has clearly fallen on deaf ears, as there have been no responses whatsoever from the Liberal government. As the member said so rightly over and over, the Liberals seem to have hundreds of millions of dollars for all of their cronies and corrupt buddies, and it is more clear than ever that the government is not worth the cost or corruption.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, my colleague has been a strong advocate not just for the energy sector, which is important in the area she comes from, but also on behalf of indigenous people right across this country.

We recently heard indigenous members say they have been let down by the government. When I meet with the five bands in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap, they tell me that all they have seen are broken promises and that money never seems to reach the ground where it is needed. I have passed the message on to the respective ministers that the money gets caught up in the bureaucracy the government has created and never reaches the people who really need it.

• (1830)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is one of well over 100 members who continue to stand up and intentionally go off topic to try to justify their behaviour, which I would argue is borderline contempt in the House of Commons. They are putting the ambitions and interests of the leader of the Conservative Party and the Conservative Party's interests ahead of Canadians' best interests. I find that shameful.

When can Canadians expect the Conservatives to do the honourable thing, the right thing, and allow this matter to come to a vote? It is their motion. When are they going to do that?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, that question makes no sense. It is from a member of the government, which has total control over the House. The Liberals could have ended this weeks ago, as I previously stated. It could have been over in less than a day.

This was an order of the House. The majority of the members of the House ordered the government to produce the documents. The government could have ended it that day, but no, the member continues to prop up his corrupt Prime Minister and his cronies, and delay proceedings in the House. It is not the Conservatives causing the delay; it is the corrupt Liberal government.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, first I want to acknowledge all the veterans across this great country. As members of Parliament, we will all be heading back to our constituencies and will take part in Remembrance Day ceremonies. I was happy to attend the Poppy Campaign launch in Saskatoon just a couple of weeks ago, and this Saturday I will be selling poppies in support of all our veterans and legions in my community.

Reg Harrison was in attendance at the Poppy Campaign launch in Saskatoon. Reg was a World War II hero, in my estimation. He

survived numerous crashes and close calls. There is a book about him, *Tales of a Bomber Pilot Who Defied Death*, authored by Deana Driver.

What is amazing is that Reg "Crash" Harrison was signing the books last year at the Nutana Legion in Saskatoon. He was 101 years old, and now he is 102 years old. He was named an honorary Snowbird with the renowned Canadian Forces aerobatics display team, which flies under the same squadron number as the one Reg served in for England. We were in Moose Jaw just a few years ago and saw "Reg 'Crash' Harrison" printed on one of the planes.

That is a bit of history as we head into Remembrance Day weekend.

I would like to give a shout-out to all the veterans and a reminder that Monday in Saskatoon we will host, yet again, the largest indoor Remembrance Day service in this country. Over 8,000 people attend at SaskTel Centre to remember our veterans.

We must thank and remember our veterans for the freedom we all enjoy today. I just wanted to say that up front because my community of Saskatoon is very proud of the veterans. This weekend we will be selling poppies, and then Monday we are going to celebrate and be involved in the Remembrance Day ceremony in Saskatoon.

It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents of Saskatoon—Grasswood to once again speak about the corruption of the Liberals. They are refusing to obey an order of the House that states they simply have to hand over the documents regarding another scandal of the Liberal Party, not anyone else's scandal.

Another scandal has come out of the government, and I am sure that by now Canadians are getting used to the scandals, unfortunately, since the Prime Minister took office in 2015. This one, though, believe me, is far more significant than the others. We are talking about close to \$400 million, \$390 million to be exact. The Liberals are going to tremendous lengths, weeks upon weeks here in the House, not wanting to simply lay down the unredacted documents we have requested. In fact you, Madam Speaker, were part of the ruling earlier.

Parliament has ground to a halt for weeks because of the Liberals' unwillingness to hand over these documents to the public. It is not us, as opposition members; we are trying to make the government accountable. It simply is not accountable, as it has been in the past, which is why we have been at this for five or six weeks in the House.

Privilege

The \$400 million of mismanaged taxpayer money shows once again how the government treats the hard-earned money of all Canadians. Furthermore, since we are talking about taxpayer dollars, I will say that Canadians have a right to know what the government is doing with their money. Although we already know where it went, the government refuses to admit it. Indeed we know, since the Auditor General has indicated that the money went to Liberal friends whom cabinet had appointed to the board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, better known as SDTC. We are calling it the green slush fund.

• (1835)

It is green for a very good reason, and that is the money that was going into the pockets of the Liberals' friends. It is interesting, as we continue with this debate, that we could be here for months. It is important to note that the government was directly in charge of appointing the board members of this fund. This company was actually a pretty good company. It was formed in 2001, and it was very good. A lot of start-ups went to this company, got some help and proceeded on. All of a sudden, the government took over in 2015, and it made changes to the board in 2016 and 2017.

Those Liberal insiders worked their way onto the board, and they were at the trough for close to \$400 million, or 186 conflicts of interest, I should say. Those are 186 instances where taxpayer money could have gone to help families struggling with the cost of living and businesses trying to stay afloat. Instead, the money was funnelled to companies with ties to senior Liberal officials.

Even worse is that \$58 million of that money went to companies that should not even have been considered by SDTC. Canadians are asking questions. They want to see all governments be accountable. They want to see all governments be responsible. Both are lacking, obviously, with the Liberal federal government. We saw this with Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, once a proud government agency. Many companies used it, as I mentioned, to promote new technologies.

In fact, on their website it says, "from seed to success". It was success from 2001 to 2015. The website today says there are three funding streams. Number one is a "one-time non-repayable contribution of \$50,000 to \$100,000 to validate an idea." Number two was to "be nominated by one of SDTC's 90+ accelerator partners." Number three was to "have raised \$100,000 to \$200,000 from accredited investors." One, two, three, it is simple.

This is frustrating, and Canadians have noted a pattern with the government. There is simply no respect for the average taxpayer. I sit on the heritage committee. Would members like for me to start on the CBC bonuses that were handed out by the government earlier in the year? It was \$18 million, with \$3.3 million going to the CBC executives, averaging over \$70,000 per executive, handed over by either the Minister of Heritage or the Privy Council. They have now said they know their KPIs, they just have to keep going. KPIs, by the way, are key performance indicators. They have never met them. There are 14; CBC met three.

What did they do? They lowered the KPIs so they could all get the bonuses, and that is what happened. The trust is down. Ad revenue is down. Viewership is down. It is surprising that the minister and the Privy Council signed off on these massive bonuses to the

executives. The Liberal government then wonders why Canadians coast to coast to coast are upset.

The finance minister said that the budget deficit would then not go over \$40 billion. I remember the hon. member standing in the House talking about how they will not have a deficit over \$40 billion. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said the other day that we are headed to a deficit of nearly \$47 billion. That is \$7 billion over, nearly 20% over the original \$40 billion that the finance minister said she would never go over. Are we surprised with any of this?

The government then decided, because it needs money as it continues to print money and give bonuses and spread to its friends, to go after the capital gains. People who spent decades planning for their retirement are now being targeted by the government.

• (1840)

In the Prime Minister's Canada, so many are forced to line up today at food banks, which is a shame. What could we feed this country with \$400 million? I have been to the Salvation Army in Saskatoon, which has a wonderful summer program that feeds kids at parks. It said today that one in four parents in this country had cut back on their own food consumption to ensure their children have enough to eat in the past year. In the past year alone, 58% of those who accessed the organization's food banks did so for the very first time. It was startling to hear that today. It is unbelievable what is going on in this country.

I have talked before about the fact that I come from a province that not only feeds Canada but feeds the world. It is the food basket of the world, and yet today there are more people in my province of Saskatchewan going to the food bank for the first time. I am very nervous. The holiday season is coming up. People in our communities, and everywhere in the country, are nervous about where they are going to get the extra cash needed for Christmas, but also for food. We are concerned about this.

The Auditor General was very clear in the report that the fault falls clearly back on the government's industry minister, who, in the words of the Auditor General, "did not sufficiently monitor" the contracts given out to Liberal insiders.

To give Canadians an idea of the Liberal corruption, I note there were 186 conflicts of interest. We have next week off and there is going to be a cabinet shuffle. I wonder if the Minister of Industry will be one of those people shuffled out, because this is a disaster that Canadians are starting to take notice of.

Privilege

I notice the hon. member for Winnipeg North cites The Hill Times. I keep citing Canada's national newspaper, The Globe and Mail. Three weeks ago, the editorial said that Conservatives are right to ask for the unredacted papers. That is The Globe and Mail's editorial board. It is not The Hill Times, it is the editorial board of Canada's most successful newspaper. It is Canada's national newspaper. Even the board of The Globe and Mail agrees with the Conservatives, the opposition, that we are within our right asking for the unredacted documents. The parliamentary secretary keeps talking about The Hill Times, which most Canadians do not read, or do not even know what it is, but Canadians do know that The Globe and Mail stands for integrity.

We are concerned because there was a board member appointed by the green slush fund way back in 2016, just a year after Liberals took office, who runs a venture capital called, as we all have heard from day to day, Cycle Capital. Her company received a total of \$250 million from this green slush fund. Some of that came before she was a board member, so that is fine, but \$114 million came to the company she had invested in while she was on the board.

When someone takes governance training, and I would think this company, SDTC, had governance training, they are told that as a member of the board, they must recuse themselves when the board is talking about their company. They must leave the room. We heard that several of these board members just stood in the back, waited for the vote and just nodded their head. Their company was up to receive money and they were watching to see what the board was going to do. This is governance 1.8. It is unreal that members of the board of governors would be allowed to stay in the boardroom as other members were talking about millions of dollars going to their companies. This is inexcusable at the lowest level of the Liberal government.

● (1845)

How can the board members stay on the board when they are talking about giving millions of dollars to their company and they know first-hand that they should have left the room? They also know that it is not good that their company is getting money from SDTC, yet it has come about.

We have seen all the allegations, almost \$400 million. That is ridiculous. Right now, Canadians from coast to coast are paying over 50% income tax in a lot of cases. They are upset over many things that our party has brought out over the last number of weeks in the House. They are upset with the carbon tax because they have now seen the playing field in this country shift dramatically with the election in the United States. There, they do not have a carbon tax. Our energy companies in my province of Saskatchewan and in Alberta are going to be under siege. They have been under siege since 2015, when the government took over.

There is an environment minister who is completely against energy in this country. He would rather go to Venezuela. He would rather go to Russia and other diplomatic countries that we should not be dealing with on energy, rather than deal with the clean energy that we produce in the prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. We are concerned about that.

We are going to see, and we have already seen, companies move their money down to Texas en masse. We have been concerned for

a number of years, but now that President Trump has taken over, we are going to see a massive amount of money leave this country. One of the reasons is the carbon tax. The carbon tax has hurt this country.

We will axe the tax. We will build the homes. I know that a lot of Liberals laugh at us on this side of the House because they say the member for Carleton has a plan that makes no sense. Stu Niebergall is the executive director of the Regina and Region Home Builders' Association. Today, he said that the federal Conservative leader's promise to cut the general sales tax, better known as the GST, on new home construction is a brilliant idea that will save families hundreds of dollars a month.

They estimate at least \$250 a month on mortgage payments. The member for Carleton's proposal would apply to new homes worth up to \$800,000. I can tell members that they can get a pretty good home in Saskatchewan for \$800,000. They probably cannot in the Toronto area, the GTA, or Vancouver, but in our province of Saskatchewan, they could get a pretty good home for \$800,000.

That is from Regina, talking about the member for Carleton coming through, cutting the GST. It would save young families trying to get into the housing market \$250 a month.

In terms of stopping the crime and fixing the budget, I do not have to tell members about fixing the budget. I have talked for 18 minutes about the corruption of the Liberals, who have spent millions and millions of dollars. I could go through their corruption since I got elected in 2015, but we would be here all night. I am only going to talk about the green slush fund, which we know was worth \$400 million. The sponsorship scandal was \$42 million, and it took down the Chrétien government.

We could not give enough golf tees and golf balls away back then. That was \$42 million. This is 10 times the amount. It is no wonder that they do not want to give the RCMP the unredacted documents. That would be historic for the Liberal Party. The green slush fund, as we all know in this country, is corrupt; it needs to be overhauled. It will take a Conservative government to overhaul it because the current government, since it came into power in 2015, has done nothing but destroy the green slush fund, which was SDTC to everybody who used it before 2015.

● (1850)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am not sure we have quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will double-check.

Privilege

And the count having been taken:

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

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpalessia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the play-by-play by the hon. member. His eloquence sets the bar very high in this place. I enjoyed, in particular, listening to him speak about his friend Reg, an extraordinary Canadian. In fact, it was by far the most edifying thing I have heard in the House in the last four weeks.

Reg and others fought for democratic principles, and one of those principles is the separation of the political from the institutions of law enforcement. Why are the Conservatives seeking to compromise that principle by insisting on foisting upon the RCMP documents it does not want? The RCMP is telling the Conservatives to stay away from it and let it do its work.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I was thinking of doing the play-by-play of the Riders and Bombers here today because it is their big playoff game on Saturday. I know those back home in Saskatchewan are looking forward to Saturday afternoon. I see members on the other side who are Argos fans. We will see if the Argos can make it to the Grey Cup this year.

I thank the member for mentioning Reg “Crash” Harrison. He has gone through a lot. He is a hero in this country. He is 102 years old, or I should say 102 years young. He believes in this country. I know if he was the member of Parliament for Saskatoon—Grasswood, he would agree that the Liberals should show us the unredacted documents so we can move on with our agenda here in the House.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I have enjoyed working together on a number of things in a positive way. This one is interesting, though.

The member talked about scandals, and what we have seen is almost a competition between the Liberals and Conservatives over scandals. I was here during the Harper scandals. Members will remember the the Senate expense scandal, with Mike Duffy claiming expenses and Nigel Wright paying for them with a cheque. There was the in-and-out scandal with regard to election financing, where the Conservatives were caught moving money around during the election. There was the robocall scandal, which, we remember that, was where Michael Sona took a hit for the Conservatives in trying to get people to vote at the wrong places.

There was the prorogation of Parliament scandal, where former prime minister Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament a couple of times. There was the Afghan detainee scandal, similar to this, where documents were not provided. There was the censorship and control of information scandal. Then there was the Elections Act amendment scandal and, lastly, one of my fan favourites, Tony Clement and the G8 fake lake and gazebo scandal.

Can my friend indicate if perhaps there are more Liberal scandals than Conservative scandals since this is what it has devolved to?

• (1855)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes, Madam Speaker, the member for Windsor West and I have worked on a number of things together and I have the utmost respect for him.

In nine short years, there has been SNC-Lavalin, the Winnipeg labs, the WE Charity, the arrive scam and the green slush fund. I have missed about five or six others. The concern I have right now is that Canadians, not only in Windsor but everywhere, are hurting. Everybody in the last week or so has talked about food bank line-ups of over two million people a month, and \$400 million is unaccounted for. What would the member do in Windsor with \$400 million? What would the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood do with \$400 million in the community? We would do quite a bit.

This is a sizable amount of money. It is the biggest scandal in the last nine years that we know of. It could be bigger than \$400 million, who knows, because the unredacted papers have not gone where they should go, and that is to the RCMP.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the words from the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood. I want to add my voice to those who have already mentioned how great it is to listen to him speak. I think this was one of his best speeches yet.

The member listed a number of scandals. It was a very long and exhaustive list. We just received news today that the employment minister co-owned a company, with a partner and a mysterious third individual, the other Randy, that seems to have applied for federal contracts using the indigenous procurement angle, yet there is still no confirmation there was an indigenous owner of this company. There were only two owners, maybe three, if we can find the other Randy.

As the member was saying, it is a difficult time for Canadians, yet the Liberals seem to have no problem with sticky fingers.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, Murray Sinclair passed away earlier this week and there is a lot of work in this country with respect to reconciliation. I remember going to Prairieland Park and listening to Murray. He did a wonderful job. I was so happy that former prime minister Harper appointed him to look after the reconciliation. Murray went to several communities in this country. It was absolutely jammed at Prairieland Park. We could hear a pin drop on the floor when he spoke.

This is disturbing because the week that Murray Sinclair passed, the Liberals all of a sudden now are hearing some rumours of the employment minister along with his company involved in procurement, which is a major story if this is true. All across this country, we believe in indigenous issues. We want to see them do a bit better financially and we have a plan, when we become government, to help aid the indigenous, the Métis and the Inuit in this country.

Privilege

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have been talking about this question of privilege for weeks. Other things that happened in the past could be described as scandals or whatever people want to call it. This led me to the following conclusion on Bill C-290 on whistle-blowers, which is now before the Senate.

At the end of the day, if we did a better job of listening to and protecting these whistle-blowers who are afraid to report wrongdoing in the government, we might realize that these people also have a duty toward taxpayers.

I would like my colleague to talk about the importance of whistle-blowers who see wrongdoing from the inside.

● (1900)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, whistle-blowers revealed everything in all of this. They came to committee and they felt free to talk about what they had seen. Whistle-blower legislation is very important. We stand with the whistle-blowers in this country because they should have the freedom to come to committees and talk about what they are seeing with the current government and the money that is not going where it should be going. I support every whistle-blower. It takes a lot of courage; I am going to say that. It is not easy being a whistle-blower in this country. They are in the line of fire because not only are they trying to get things right, but employees around them may look the other way. Certainly the government of the day does not believe in whistle-blowers because they are showing the corruption of the current Liberal government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party is virtually bordering on contempt because of the multi-million dollar game that the Conservatives are playing, and the member opposite says not to worry, that they have a quote from a newspaper.

Let me provide a quote. This is from Steven Chaplin's Hill Times story. He states:

It is time for the House of Commons to admit it was wrong, and to move on. There has now been three weeks of debate on a questionable matter of privilege based on the misuse of the House' power to order producing documents

Who should we believe: Steven Chaplin or some reporter whom the member is referring to?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, we have been trying to move on for weeks. It is simple: Produce the papers and we will move on. Canadians want that.

The government has run out of ideas. That is why the members of the government do not want to show the unredacted papers. It is pretty obvious, standing over here, when we go home and listen to Canadians, that the Liberals are out of ideas. Of course the Liberals are going to continue this for weeks and months because they are out of ideas. They are tired and Canadians want a new government.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me no pleasure to rise in the House today to speak yet again to the issue of Liberal corruption. This is my second time rising in the House, and I will continue to rise as long as the Liberals refuse

to hand over evidence to the RCMP. The Conservatives will not allow the Prime Minister or his caucus to hide the truth that Canadians deserve.

It is deeply concerning to witness the government covering up yet another scandal. According to the program's website, SDTC was a government-funded program that claimed to help Canadian companies “develop and deploy sustainable technologies by delivering critical funding support at every stage of their journey—from seed to success.”

What the program's website does not tell Canadians is that SDTC became corrupt when the Liberals made changes to its board of directors in 2019 under the direction of the Liberal industry minister, whose appointments were made to the board. The website does not tell us that the companies owned by these appointed directors would soon be caught in conflicts of interest due to receiving the same funds they were responsible for handing out. The SDTC website does not tell us that Liberal insiders began to siphon funds into their own pockets and were getting rich for years, while the Prime Minister and his cabinet turned a blind eye.

How do we know this happened? Extremely brave whistle-blowers came forward to call out the corruption they saw while working at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Without their honesty, bravery and sense of morality, this scandal may have never been uncovered. Thanks to the whistle-blowers who flipped the spotlight on the corruption, the rats are now scrambling for cover.

The investigations that occurred as a result revealed that SDTC's negligence was much more than just mismanagement of funds. Yes, I did say investigations, plural, because both the Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General have reported findings that greed and corruption were allowed to thrive under the Liberal government's watch.

Over the course of multiple investigations, including investigations by Conservatives at committee, it seems Parliament has only scratched the surface of the Liberal corruption. What started as tens of thousands of Canadian tax dollars being quietly directed to Liberal insiders turned into hundreds of thousands, which turned into millions, then tens of millions and finally hundreds of millions of dollars. Multiple investigations have revealed that through the green slush fund, \$390 million in funding was approved for projects that had extremely disturbing conflicts.

Privilege

What the Auditor General found, which was frightening, was evidence that the Liberals' green slush fund handed out \$58 million to projects without a promise that contribution agreement terms were met. Another \$58 million went to 10 projects deemed ineligible, as they, at times, could not prove an environmental benefit or were not developing green technology.

● (1905)

Finally, there was \$334 million in over 186 cases where SDTC board members held a conflict of interest. Let that sink in. Out of the cases sampled, the Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest, and who knows how many more she will find. Maybe that is why the Liberals will not release the documents to the RCMP. Canadians listening can draw their own conclusions.

I am proud to say that upon discovering the gross negligence and potentially criminal acts, the Conservatives stood firm and demanded that a proper investigation take place. The Conservatives voted to pass an order in the House of Commons to force the Liberals to hand over documents involved in the green slush fund. We demanded that they be handed over to the RCMP so a proper investigation can take place.

However, surprise, surprise, the Liberals voted against the document production and refused to release the documents to the House of Commons. This is undoubtedly a breach of parliamentary privileges, as the Speaker of the House of Commons has ruled. It is this breach of privilege that my Conservative colleagues continue to raise today.

Not only were the Liberals caught giving funds to their Liberal friends, but the minister responsible was also exposed for handing out tax dollars to projects with no guarantee that the projects would have a positive environmental effect. Some SDTC fund recipients had no requirements to meet the environmental goal set out in the fund, and others were not eligible for funding.

The Liberals failed to manage the program, leading to \$390 million going into the bank accounts of Liberal insiders, which is precisely why the SDTC documents must be handed over to the RCMP so Canadians can understand just how corrupt the deal was and whether it was criminal. The situation proves once again that the Liberals are nothing more than fake environmentalists. We must hold the government accountable.

In my previous intervention on the topic, I listed several Liberal scandals that have been uncovered in the nine years under the Prime Minister, such as the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the WE Charity scandal and the \$9-million condo on Billionaire's Row in New York. There are many more to list, but I am sure the Liberals know which ones they are.

All the blunders have a few things in common. They all have the fingerprints of the Prime Minister on them. They all involve Liberal negligence and the misuse of taxpayer dollars. Canadians are worse off for each and every scandal that the Liberals have created.

The Prime Minister has inflicted incredible damage on Canadians' well-being. Billions of Canadian tax dollars are being mismanaged by the Liberal government, and in some cases they are going directly to the Liberals' friends, with no real commitment to get re-

sults for Canadians who foot the bill. It has become clear that instead of working to ensure that Canadians have affordable food to eat, Liberals focus on ensuring that Liberals can fill their bank accounts. Instead of building enough affordable homes for Canadians to live in, Liberals choose to build bureaucracy and red tape. Canadians deserve a government that can benefit them, not just Liberal elites.

Life has become so expensive that 58% of parents are facing food-related challenges. One in four of these parents says that they personally ate less so their children and family members could eat, and 86% said that they are buying less-nutritious food for their children because it is cheaper. In my region, the King Township Food Bank has reported that food bank usage has doubled since 2019. The Vaughan Food Bank reported that 46,780 meals have been served since January.

● (1910)

Unfortunately, this Liberal corruption does not just have financial effects on Canadians, but it also has eroded the faith that Canadians have in all politicians.

I cannot help but reflect on the 2015 campaign and how the Prime Minister spoke of sunny ways, and creating the most open and transparent government ever. I would like to remind the Prime Minister that talk is cheap. I challenge him to support his words by acting on them. I ask him to prove to Canadians that he and his government will do the right thing by passing over the unredacted documents to the RCMP and let the chips fall where they may.

In order to regain the trust of the electorate, politicians must be held to a higher standard of accountability with repercussions for their unethical, corrupt actions. Members of Parliament are given the title "honourable". The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines "honourable" as "honest and fair". If members do not behave honestly and fairly, I feel they should be stripped of this title.

Last night I had a call with Stephanie, a bright, intelligent woman who has been following the proceedings of this scandal. She asked if I could pass on her message, so I will read her letter now in its entirety. I know Stephanie is listening right now. I have to replace names with titles in order to fit the rules of the House of Commons. I promised her I would pass on her message, and that is what I am doing tonight.

The letter states, “Dear Anna, I saw your outrage regarding the shooting of a helpful neighbour during a home invasion in Nobleton last Monday evening. The helpful neighbour who got shot was my work sister’s husband. What the news story failed to report was that this man was shot in front of his six-year-old son. It was the boy who FaceTimed his mother yesterday while she was at work in the office adjacent to mine saying that his father had been shot. It is her six-year-old son that told his grandmother last night that he failed his father because he could not protect him. He had surgery last night at Sunnybrook and had a bowel resection. They are waiting in a room in yet another crowded, overcapacity hospital. I am beside myself with anger and frustration. [This Prime Minister] is Canada’s biggest terrorist. He is an economic vandal that has let criminals run rampant, and nothing is happening. I watch clips of what is going on in the House of Commons and in Parliament all the time, and we are going in circles.”

* * *

● (1915)

POINTS OF ORDER

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE WHEN QUOTING FROM CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With all due respect to the individual who authored the letter, the member should be aware that we cannot do something indirectly that we cannot do directly. Calling a member of the House of Commons a “terrorist” is definitely unparliamentary.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is reading a letter into the record. She is not the one who is making a comment. It is a correspondence that she has received. It does not necessarily reflect the idea of the member herself. I will allow her to continue.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is a very important ruling. What you are saying is that I can bring in any sort of correspondence, say it is a letter and then read a litany of unparliamentary words because they are in a letter. At the very least, maybe you should take this under advisement and come back to the House because it is a very serious ruling.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did just speak to that.

I have another point of order, from the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member for Winnipeg North was challenging your ruling.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As I said, the hon. member was reading something into the record. I understand that some words are not acceptable. We can mention the word “terrorist”, but we should not be attributing it to somebody.

Adjournment Proceedings

Unfortunately, the time is up for debate tonight, but I will certainly take the discussion under consideration and will come back to the House if need be.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (1920)

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Adjournment Proceedings, we debate questions that were not answered properly in question period, when members of the opposition ask a question and the government refuses to answer or provides an unsatisfactory answer. This, indeed, is the case with the question that I asked on June 14. I noted that the Liberals had promised to be the most open and transparent government in history and had said that the data paid for by Canadians belonged to Canadians. I went on to say that the Conservatives forced the government to release some of the data the government had been suppressing relating to the cost of the carbon tax, and it showed the Minister of Environment had in fact misled Canadians. I then asked if he would resign.

The answer I got was quite unsatisfactory. He did not speak to the issue at all, but insisted that the Conservatives should resign since they did not agree with him about the carbon tax. We are here tonight to debate this question.

The reason I asked this question is that the minister and his department had withheld a report clearly stating that the cost of the carbon tax was an additional \$30 billion, which had not been made public. They suppressed this information and prevented the Parliamentary Budget Officer from having it. The Parliamentary Budget Officer was forced to resort to the access to information system, which goes to the business of the government’s promise of openness and transparency.

It promised in 2015 to be the most open and transparent government in Canadian history. It made a big deal about this. This was an important promise. For those of us who go back to the election in 2015, this promise was one of the ways the Liberals, really, ate the NDP’s lunch.

The New Democrats, to their credit, have historically been very concerned about the secretive nature of a history’s worth of Canadian governments. At least before they started propping up the Liberals, they were for openness and transparency. The Liberals took away that plank from their platform, copied it and promised openness and transparency, with sunny ways. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, they said. However, as I said in my question on June 14, that is a sick joke. The government is so secretive that, right now, Parliament is seized with its refusal to table documents related to SDTC.

Adjournment Proceedings

Getting back to the question, the minister suppressed information about the carbon tax and gamed the access to information system, which was used to deny information to journalists, academics, regular Canadians and individuals who are in a conflict or have a grievance with the government. It is unfortunate that it would not release the information.

I do not expect the parliamentary secretary to say the minister has resigned as we asked for, but we have new reasons for him to resign. The scandals continue. We have a new scandal wherein he has perhaps conflicted himself in the SDTC scandal.

I will ask it again: Will the minister resign?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not really know where to start to answer the member's question because that is not the question that he submitted for adjournment debate. I am here at the late show almost every evening, and this has become a trend with the Conservatives.

I would point out to the member from the Conservative Party that he has already had 40 minutes in the House of Commons to speak to the SDTC issue. He has spoken to it twice. The Conservative Party had to go back and amend its original motion so folks could repeat their lines over again, ad nauseam, and continue to filibuster in the House of Commons.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Point of order.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: You cannot have a point of order during an adjournment debate. You had your moment.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that the member was talking about—

• (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the hon. member that he had an opportunity to ask his question. Now he needs to listen to the answer, whether he likes it or not. He can then come back to the House with a response.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, like I said, I am in adjournment debates all the time, so I know there are no points of order or anything like that. We are here to discuss an issue, but this is not the issue that he sent in when he requested a late show. He talked about PBO documents and an access to information request. That is misleading Canadians.

The commissioner of the environment's report came out today indicating that our emissions are the lowest that they have been since the mid-1990s, and that is good news for Canadians. It is clear the Conservative Party is not focusing on emissions reductions or protecting the environment. It is not interested in climate change. Conservatives work for big oil and gas.

We have proposed a cap on emissions and a cap on pollution for the oil and gas sector, primarily in Alberta, and Alberta MPs are standing in defiance of that because they do not want emissions to go down. They feel as though the oil and gas sector can continue to use Canada as an exhaust pipe. Sadly, the emissions intensity of

many types of energy products in Alberta have gotten worse since the 1990s because of a lack of regulation. We have focused on emissions reductions and efficiency.

The Conservative members claim to be experts on the environment and on oil and gas, but it is obvious, through their speeches in the House of Commons, that they are neither.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that I am speaking to the question that was presented before the late show. It was about the carbon tax. It was about the suppressed report. The reason I asked the question on June 14 was that the Minister of the Environment had suppressed a report. That led to the access to information system, which the minister was using to suppress and prevent the release of the report.

The parliamentary secretary said several things that were untrue. I am sorry that I tried to raise a point of order—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member said that the parliamentary secretary mentioned something that was untrue. The hon. member cannot say indirectly what he cannot say directly.

The hon. member.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, it is customary in the House to give members a chance to correct the record when they make a mistake. That is what this member must have done because he said things that were not correct. For example, he was not correct on the number of times I have spoken to the motion, its amendments and its subamendments. I do not want to digress too far from the question, but I still have not had an answer.

The minister misled Canadians. In my question on June 14, I asked for his resignation. We continue to insist that this member actually do so, for a litany of what would ordinarily be offences giving good cause to resign.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, let me get this straight. Is the member opposite saying he would like the minister to resign because he is a climate action expert and he has put in place a price on pollution across this country to lower emissions, which is effectively lowering emissions?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, getting heckled during adjournment debate is something special. The House is about to adjourn. Members do not need to be here into the wee hours to heckle.

I answered the member's question and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. The hon. member for Lakeland may want to not heckle during late shows.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Point of order.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): No, there is no point of order, first of all. The hon. member does not have a question and should not be participating in the debate at this moment. I will ask the hon. member for Lakeland to leave the chamber. If she heckles one more time, I will have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort her out.

The hon. parliamentary secretary can wrap it up, please.

• (1930)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, our government has been unapologetically ambitious in lowering our emissions and fighting for the environment. The Minister of Environment has brought forward over 100 measures to lower our emissions. Canadians want us to focus on the environment.

I went to the doors in 2019 and 2021, and young people, families and the elderly are concerned about climate change. Extreme weather is affecting Canadians disproportionately more than people around the world. Of people who were evacuated from their homes due to wildfire, 42% were Canadian, so I wish the Conservative Party would get the message and come forward with some actual climate action.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:32 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, November 7, 2024

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

The Speaker 27535

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux 27535

Hon. Murray Sinclair

Mr. Vandal 27535

Mr. Schmale 27536

Mr. Fortin 27537

Ms. Gazan 27537

Committees of the House

Foreign Affairs and International Development

Mr. Ehsassi 27538

Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Mr. Brassard 27538

Public Safety and National Security

Mr. McKinnon 27538

Industry and Technology

Motion for concurrence 27538

Ms. Rempel Garner 27538

Mr. van Koeverden 27540

Mr. Green 27540

Mr. Chambers 27541

Amendment 27542

Mr. Lamoureux 27542

Mr. Masse 27542

Ms. Larouche 27543

Mr. Gerretsen 27543

Mr. Simard 27544

Ms. Mathyssen 27544

Mr. Abouttaif 27545

Mr. van Koeverden 27545

Mr. Melillo 27547

Mr. Barsalou-Duval 27547

Mr. Angus 27548

Privilege

Refusal of Witness to Respond to Questions from Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Mr. MacGregor 27548

Mr. Epp 27549

Mr. Lamoureux 27549

Mr. Barsalou-Duval 27549

Committees of the House

Industry and Technology

Motion for concurrence 27549

Mr. Ste-Marie 27549

Mr. Lamoureux 27552

Mr. Masse 27552

Ms. Larouche 27552

Mr. Masse 27553

Mr. Lamoureux 27556

Mr. Genuis 27556

Ms. Larouche 27557

Ms. McPherson 27557

Mr. Zuberi 27557

Mr. Perkins 27559

Ms. McPherson 27559

Mr. Gerretsen 27559

Mr. Lamoureux 27559

Mr. Perkins 27560

Mr. Barsalou-Duval 27561

Mr. Green 27561

Mr. Perkins 27561

Division on amendment deferred 27564

Commissioner of Lobbying

Mr. Lamoureux 27564

Motion 27564

(Motion agreed to) 27564

Information Commissioner

Mr. Lamoureux 27564

Motion 27564

(Motion agreed to) 27564

Petitions

Falun Gong

Mr. Epp 27564

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Genuis 27565

Freedom of Political Expression

Mr. Genuis 27565

Falun Gong

Mr. Genuis 27565

Eritrea

Mr. Genuis 27565

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 27565

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion 27565

Ms. Dance 27565

Mrs. Atwin 27567

Mr. Leslie	27567
Ms. Larouche	27567
Mr. Julian	27568
Mr. Patzer	27568
Ms. Mathysen	27568

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Michael Robert Ellchook

Mr. Powlowski	27568
---------------------	-------

Diabetes Awareness Month

Mr. Leslie	27569
------------------	-------

Premier of New Brunswick

Mrs. Atwin	27569
------------------	-------

Veterans' Week

Mr. Desilets	27569
--------------------	-------

Chinese Railroad Workers

Mr. Jowhari	27569
-------------------	-------

Innovation, Science and Industry

Mr. Gourde	27569
------------------	-------

Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon

Mr. Hanley	27570
------------------	-------

Public Safety

Mr. Duguid	27570
------------------	-------

Consulate General of Canada in New York

Mr. Tochor	27570
------------------	-------

Veterans' Week

Ms. Hepfner	27570
-------------------	-------

Government Policies

Mr. Steinley	27571
--------------------	-------

Leader of the New Democratic Party

Mr. Albas	27571
-----------------	-------

Veterans' Week

Mr. Sarai	27571
-----------------	-------

Lebanese Heritage Month

Ms. Mathysen	27571
--------------------	-------

Women's Rights

Ms. Larouche	27571
--------------------	-------

Indigenous Procurement

Mr. Genuis	27572
------------------	-------

Leonard William Elliott

Mrs. Romanado	27572
---------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Oil and Gas Industry

Mr. Scheer	27572
Mr. Guilbeault	27572

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Scheer	27572
Mr. Guilbeault	27573
Mr. Scheer	27573
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	27573

The Environment

Mr. Berthold	27573
Mr. Guilbeault	27573
Mr. Berthold	27573
Mr. Guilbeault	27573

International Trade

Mr. Therrien	27573
Ms. Gould	27574
Mr. Therrien	27574
Ms. Bibeau	27574

The Environment

Mr. Boulerice	27574
Mr. Guilbeault	27574
Ms. Barron	27574
Mr. Guilbeault	27574

Natural Resources

Mr. Kurek	27574
Mr. Guilbeault	27575
Mr. Kurek	27575
Ms. Bendayan	27575
Mr. Patzer	27575
Mr. Turnbull	27575
Mr. Patzer	27575
Ms. Bendayan	27575
Mr. Lake	27576
Mr. Turnbull	27576
Mr. Small	27576
Ms. Gould	27576

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	27576
Mr. LeBlanc	27576
Ms. Michaud	27576
Mr. LeBlanc	27576
Ms. Michaud	27577
Mr. Miller	27577

The Environment

Mr. Mazier	27577
Mr. Guilbeault	27577
Mr. Mazier	27577
Mr. van Koeverden	27577
Mr. Martel	27577
Mrs. Lebouthillier	27577

Employment

Ms. Kwan	27578
Mr. Kusmierczyk	27578

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Ashton	27578
Ms. Hajdu	27578

Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Morrissey	27578
Mr. MacAulay	27578

Public Services and Procurement	
Mr. Barrett	27578
Ms. Gould	27579
Mr. Barrett	27579
Mr. Sousa	27579
Mr. Lloyd	27579
Mr. Sousa	27579
Mr. Schmale	27579
Mr. Sousa	27579

The Environment	
Mr. Simard	27579
Mr. Guilbeault	27579
Mr. Simard	27580
Mr. Guilbeault	27580

Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Richards	27580
Mr. Fraser	27580
Mr. Richards	27580
Mr. Sarai	27580

Housing	
Mrs. Vien	27580
Mr. Fraser	27581
Ms. Dzerowicz	27581
Mr. Fraser	27581

Public Safety	
Mr. Jivani	27581
Mr. Virani	27581
Mr. Jivani	27581
Mr. LeBlanc	27581
Mr. Baldinelli	27582
Mr. LeBlanc	27582

Sport	
Ms. Diab	27582
Ms. Qualtrough	27582

Housing	
Ms. Zarrillo	27582
Mr. Fraser	27582

Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Vuong	27582
Mr. Sarai	27583

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House	
Industry and Technology	
Motion for concurrence	27583
The Deputy Speaker	27584
Amendment agreed to	27584
Motion agreed to	27585

Places of Worship	
Mr. Julian	27585
Motion	27585
(Motion agreed to)	27586

Business of the House	
Mr. Nater	27586
Ms. Gould	27586

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege	
Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs	
Motion	27586
Mr. Kurek	27586
Mr. Maloney	27589
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	27589
Ms. Idlout	27589
Mr. McCauley	27590
Mrs. Wagantall	27590
Ms. Gladu	27590

2024 Olympic and Paralympic Athletes	
Mr. Gerretsen	27591
Motion	27591
(Motion agreed to)	27591

Privilege	
Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs	
Motion	27591
Ms. Gladu	27591
Mr. Scarpaleggia	27593
Mrs. Vignola	27593
Mr. Masse	27594
Mr. McCauley	27594
Mr. Lamoureux	27594
Mr. Dreeshen	27595
Mr. Lamoureux	27597
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	27597
Ms. Barron	27598
Mr. Waugh	27598
Mr. Hardie	27598
Mr. Baldinelli	27598
Mrs. Atwin	27601
Mrs. Vignola	27601
Ms. Barron	27602
Mr. Lamoureux	27602
Mr. Waugh	27603

ROYAL ASSENT

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes)	27603
--	-------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	27603
Mr. Arnold	27603
Mr. Lamoureux	27606
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	27606
Mr. Boulerice	27606
Mrs. Stubbs	27606
Mr. Waugh	27607
Mr. Scarpaleggia	27610
Mr. Masse	27610
Mr. Schmale	27610

Mrs. Vignola	27611
Mr. Lamoureux	27611
Mrs. Roberts	27611

Points of Order

Unparliamentary Language when Quoting from Correspondence

Mr. Lamoureux	27613
---------------------	-------

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Kelly	27613
Mr. van Koeverden	27614

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