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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 2, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 7(3) of the Auditor General Act, the fall 2024 reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In light of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has given notice of a motion for debate on the Conservative opposition day scheduled for today, I would like to give him an opportunity to debate that motion. As such, I seek unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House that: (a) at noon today the proceedings in relation to the debate on the motion in relation to the question of privilege standing in the name of the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the question of privilege standing in the name of the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes shall be deemed adjourned until Wednesday, December 4, and (b) if proceedings in relation to the debate on the motion in relation to the question of privilege standing in the name of the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the question of privilege standing in the name of the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes are not disposed of at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on Wednesday, December 4, these proceedings shall be deemed adjourned until Friday, December 6.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. minister moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not know why the Conservatives would deny leave in order to debate the motion that they said they wanted to debate today.

The Speaker: That is sounding a lot like debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from November 29 consideration of the motion, of the amendment as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the government has not taken me up on my offer of Friday, that I would give up the last six minutes of my speech if it just decided to do a Friday document dump with this information being handed over.

At the end of my speech on Friday, I was talking about the gravy train that had to come to an end at some point for SDTC when whistle-blowers in 2022, and more so in 2023, came forward with very concerning allegations. The Auditor General rightfully announced that there would be an audit of SDTC, which was released in June 2024, and only a sample of those contracts were actually investigated by the AG. She found that \$390 million of funds was inappropriately awarded. Even worse, there were 186 conflicts of interest, not one, not two, not that this would be acceptable, and this was only a quarter of all the projects. We can all assume that the damage is much worse for taxpayers.

In light of this damning evidence provided by the AG, the House of Commons of duly elected members passed a motion directing the government to hand over those documents. It was stipulated that they could also be handed to the RCMP, which could investigate whether criminal offences were committed by the government.

What have the Liberals done? They did their best work in delaying and distracting, forcing the Speaker to rule that the government had violated the privilege of the House and all of its members. As representatives of Canadians, wherever we may come from and whatever party we may be a part of, it is our duty to defend and uphold our democratic institutions, especially in light of the overwhelming disrespect being shown by the Liberal government for not just taxpayers but for all Canadians who we represent here.

Privilege

It is surprising to me that I see a continued silence from the government side, those who are more or less willingly aiding and abetting the government in this. It is objectively wrong, and we all know that. To not stand up against it is simply wrong. This is not a technical disagreement or a procedural matter. It is a direct and deliberate defiance of the authority of Parliament and the fundamental bedrock of our democracy. In turn, the government itself has sabotaged the work of Parliament, preventing anything from moving forward.

The question of course has to be: What are the Liberals hiding? Why are they so concerned about handing over these documents? What are the consequences that they fear so much? Their refusal to release these documents speaks volumes, and Canadians are sick and tired of it.

I would like to narrow in on one specific piece of this plot line, which is on our radical environment minister, whose behaviour epitomises what is wrong with the Liberal government. Before he came to Ottawa to enact his lazy and failed environmental policies, he was a strategic adviser at Cycle Capital, an environmental venture firm owned and operated by an individual who was miraculously on the SDTC board, where millions of dollars were given to this firm. The minister owns shares in Cycle Capital, a business that has profited handsomely during this time. In fact, its valuation skyrocketed roughly 600% since he entered cabinet and, of course, another \$17 million were handed over during his tenure.

This is not a lapse in judgment; this is a blatant conflict of interest. It is really a slap in the face to Canadians who expect their tax dollars to be spent wisely, not used to make oneself and one's friends rich. The minister has ignored the law. He has made a mockery of his position and the public trust that he holds.

To summarize in my last two minutes, the Auditor General looked at five years of transactions, 226 deals that were approved, and found 186 conflicts of interest. In different terms, 82% of all the transactions had a conflict of interest. Again, it was not 1%, not 2%, not that this would be acceptable, but this is so far beyond acceptable. The fact that we have seen a government refuse to hand over documents and that members on the government side have not stood up and said that this is something they should probably take a serious look at, that maybe the RCMP should too is why it is so vital that these documents be handed over. At the time, the conflicts of interest were deemed "manageable" by the chair of the board, the Liberal-appointed chair, who has seen this rot and corruption run rampant throughout her time in leading this board.

• (1110)

What is worse is that when we think about the volume of \$400 million, it is very difficult to understand what that made-up amount of money seems like. People should think about the taxes they pay with respect to income tax. They should think of their neighbours down the street and all those in their communities, the well over 20,000 people, at the average salary, paying all their taxes just for the government to waste it to make itself richer. At the end of the day, it is vital for the government to be honest, to show a little humility for the first time in these long, miserable last nine years of its tenure.

I hope that some of my Liberal colleagues, after hearing me and many of our colleagues discuss this egregious process that has been taken, will stand up and say that it is time to cut the cover-up, to hand over the documents and face whatever consequences may be entailed. This simply cannot stand. Canadians are watching. They are waiting patiently for a carbon tax election. Let us have that election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said that "it is our duty to defend and uphold our democratic institutions." Today there is breaking news from the CBC with regard to the Conservative leadership. I would like to quote from the story. It says, "campaign workers were told by representatives of the government of India to stop supporting Brown, not to sell membership cards for him and not to invite him to certain events."

There is a strong connection between the corruption within the Conservative Party and its leadership and the current leader. This is a very serious issue, yet we have the leader of the Conservative Party today refusing to get the security clearance, the only leader in the House of Commons who has refused. I have been accusing him for weeks now of hiding something. I believe this is one of the issues that he has been hiding behind.

When the member talks about defending and upholding our democratic institutions, does he not believe that the leader of the official opposition has a responsibility to Canadians to stop hiding, come clean and get the security clearance?

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that the government's best attribute is to distract and deflect. That question was a great way of showing that. This is about the \$400 million of corrupt lining of the pockets of Liberals and their insiders. To try to spin this into anything else is just simply absurd.

I am not going to take any lessons from that member who has been part of the corrupt nine-year-long government that has failed Canadians and driven up the cost of housing, of rent and everything else in life. Meanwhile the Liberals have been making themselves and their Liberal insiders rich.

• (1115)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is shocking to me how much of a scandal this is and how much money we are talking about. I thought it was very collegial of my colleague to have offered the government to give up his time if it simply released the documents.

When I talk to people in Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, they are astounded by the fact that the government is so afraid of what these documents contain that it refuses to release them. Is that something he hears about in Portage—Lisgar?

Privilege

Mr. Brandon Leslie: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, it is a topic of conversation when folks turn on CPAC and wonder why we are still debating this. Logical people like the common-sense folks who I represent ask why the government would not just hand over these documents. They say that there has to be something to hide. Most definitely they ask me what I think is in the documents. I tell them I do not know because the government has a great track record, whenever they do hand over any documents, of heavily blacking out and redacting documents so we can barely read them. We have been seeing this at our environment committee about a second new green slush fund, which I suspect we may be having a similar debate about in the not-too-distant future.

The other question I am often asked about is when can we have the carbon tax election. I hope to answer that very soon.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I came up yesterday with great anticipation that we would get some work done this week in the House of Commons for Canadians. Obviously, I am very disappointed. I am here to work on behalf of my constituents of Saint John—Rothesay. I am here to continue to advocate for stuff like our wonderful housing programs, our child care benefits, so on and so forth. However, we cannot get that work done for Canadians.

My first question for the member opposite is whether he is ready to get to work on behalf of Canadians. Second, we know that the Leader of the Opposition will not get a security clearance. Could the member talk to his leader and please encourage him to get that security clearance? More and more Canadians week in, week out are wondering what is up with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Brandon Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I will happily talk to my leader, as will all my colleagues, because we actually like our leader, something we on this side of the House are awfully proud of.

Only a Liberal would stand here and say they want to get to work but not talk about the \$400-million corruption the Liberals are caught up in. I can tell my colleague this is work: holding a government to account for what the Auditor General has found to be an egregious 186 conflicts of interest, lining the pockets of itself and its insiders. Canadians ask me where the money is, where it has gone. We have borrowed, we have spent and now we see more Liberal corruption. If the member does not call this work, I do not know what they would call it.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing that really grabbed my attention was that 82% of the files the Auditor General went through were found to have some corruption potential. I am also concerned that these are just the documents the Auditor General reviewed.

I would like to ask my colleague whether he suspects, as I do, that if the Auditor General were to do a review of all the contracts at SDTC, the \$400 million may pale in comparison to what we might find is the actual corruption that went on in that particular fund.

Mr. Brandon Leslie: Mr. Speaker, that is a great point. Like in any other sampling, polling or anything like that, a sample is picked, and that is what the Auditor General obviously did. This is the level of corruption that was found during that investigation. It is only reasonable to assume the percentage would continue and,

worse, the dollar value of the nearly \$400 million of misspent funds is going to continue on that same trajectory, too.

We do not yet know the total cost to taxpayers of the Liberal corruption, which is obviously of deep concern. That is why it is so vital that, despite the deflection and distraction attempts by Liberals across the way, we get to the bottom of this and, more importantly, give the RCMP the opportunity to view these documents to find out if, in fact, anything criminal took place with the \$390 million that we know of, and probably a heck of a lot more.

• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the leader of the official opposition continues to hide his past because he is scared to get the security clearance. He is playing a multi-million dollar game at great cost to Canadians because he wants to give the documents to the RCMP, which has said it does not want to receive them in the form of an instruction from the leader of the Conservative Party, but rather that the issue should be sent to the procedure and House affairs committee.

The leader of the Conservative Party is a destructive force to democracy in Canada today. On those two policies alone, will the member talk to his leader, explain to his leader that what he is doing is politically good for his self-interest but not in the best interests of Canadians, and that the Leader of the Opposition needs to get the security clearance and stop this multi-million dollar game?

Mr. Brandon Leslie: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that getting to the bottom of \$400 million of Liberal corruption is not in the best interests of the Liberal Party. It is in the best interests of Canadians. While the member might find it astounding that Parliament has a role to play in checks and balances on the corrupt Liberal government, I do not.

I was not sent here by my constituents to be a guy who says, “It is fine; it is only \$400 million and since the Liberals have spent so much more than that, it is really just a drop in the bucket.” While he may not care about the taxpayers' money that is brought in by the government, and the additional amounts borrowed to pay for its tax-and-spend policies that are driving up the cost of everything, my constituents do. Every day, I will consider this not a waste of time and money but a proud role that opposition members must and will continue to play until the government hands over the documents.

Privilege

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): That is outrageous, Mr. Speaker. My colleague is talking about spending and Liberal corruption, but Parliament has been paralyzed for a month and a half now. How many millions of dollars has it cost our constituents and taxpayers in Quebec and Canada for the Conservatives to do what they have doing for the past month and a half?

We are not talking about things that are important to Canadians right now. We are not talking about inflation or the fight against climate change. We are not talking about the housing crisis or the language crisis. The Conservatives have been wasting our time for the past month and a half. My colleague should be embarrassed about what he is saying.

[*English*]

Mr. Brandon Leslie: First of all, Mr. Speaker, Parliament functions whether we are debating this or anything else, as it should, and this is an important function of Parliament. That is why members of the House voted with a majority, supported by the Speaker, to continue this investigation, and I happily will do that because this is important. Anybody who thinks \$400 million can just be swept under the rug probably should not be in this place spending any money at all.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly six months since the order was given by the House demanding the Liberal government provide documents regarding conflicts with Sustainable Development Technology Canada's board of directors. For the last two and a half months, the chamber has been in the midst of the longest privilege debate this place has ever seen. Why is that? The reason is not complicated: The Liberal government has refused to honour its obligation, as affirmed by the House, to produce unredacted documents related to the \$400-million green slush fund scandal.

It can be tempting to look at this issue from only a procedural lens, but that would be a mistake. This is not just a procedural issue; it strikes at the very core of the democratic accountability of this country. Government transparency is paramount to the functioning of our democracy. This principle is not just a matter of political theory but the foundation upon which trust between Canadians and their elected officials is built. Without it, confidence in public institutions erodes, governance fails and the needs of everyday Canadians are ignored.

The ruling of the Speaker was clear: the government must produce these documents. The House has the authority to compel the production of documents, persons or papers, yet for two and a half months, the Liberal government has defied this directive by withholding critical information. That is just the time we have been speaking about this in the House. It disrespects not only the will of the members of the House but also every single Canadian we have the honour of representing. In this place, we are their voices. When we ask for transparency and accountability from the government on their behalf, the government should recognize the full weight of responsibility it has, not only to the House but also to the Canadians we represent.

In response to the order from the Speaker, the Liberal government provided heavily redacted documents, which is not in the spir-

it of what was requested and is not enough. What we need, and what Canadians deserve, are the full, unredacted records so they can be handed over to the appropriate authorities for thorough investigation.

This scandal is staggering in its scope. We are talking about \$400 million of taxpayers' money funnelled into a so-called green initiative that enriched Liberal-appointed board members. There were 186 documented conflicts of interest, where individuals on this board voted on decisions that directly benefited their own financial interests. That is almost equivalent to one conflict every other day last year.

The situation surrounding Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, is a clear example of the need for greater government accountability. SDTC was a Crown corporation funded entirely by taxpayers. Its mandate was to promote the development and commercialization of clean technologies and contribute to environmental sustainability. In theory, SDTC was an organization that should have been helping to build a greener, more sustainable future for Canada. Instead, we see an organization where the scale of corruption is mind-boggling.

To put \$400 million into perspective, it is the annual federal income tax paid by around 22,000 hard-working Canadian families. These families sacrifice their time and energy to pay their dues, believing their money will be used to improve their lives and communities. Instead, it went to enrich a select few Liberal insiders. That is not just mismanagement; it is a betrayal of public trust and we should not turn a blind eye to it. However, the most troubling part of this scandal is not the misallocation of taxpayers' dollars; it is the fact that despite these findings, the Liberal government has failed to act. The House issued an order for the production of documents related to this scandal that could help uncover the full extent of the wrongdoing and hold those responsible to account, yet the government has refused to comply.

● (1125)

The Auditor General is an essential part of our system of checks and balances. This independent officer of Parliament is tasked with reviewing government operations and ensuring that public funds are spent wisely and ethically. The Auditor General's office gives Canadians an impartial, thorough examination of government activities, often uncovering serious issues of mismanagement, waste or misconduct that would otherwise remain hidden. It is the job of the House to take those findings seriously, to examine them and to demand accountability from those who are entrusted with managing public resources.

The Auditor General's work is not only about finding faults but also about protecting Canadians. When the Auditor General raises a red flag, it is the responsibility of the government to respond with transparency, to take corrective action and to ensure public funds are being spent appropriately.

Privilege

The Auditor General looked at the operations of Sustainable Development Technology Canada after a whistle-blower came forward. She conducted a thorough investigation and ultimately highlighted some troubling findings. She determined that the whistle-blower complaints were rooted in serious issues within SDTC; shockingly, her investigation uncovered nearly 400 million dollars' worth of contracts that were inappropriately awarded to members of the board of directors, all of whom had multiple conflicts of interest.

Despite the Auditor General's finding and the grave nature of the issues uncovered, we see a government that continues to ignore its responsibility. The Liberal government has failed to comply with House orders, obstructed investigations and protected insiders who have violated public trust. This cannot continue. In recent months, Canadians have witnessed a troubling pattern of obfuscation and avoidance from the government. Time and again, legitimate requests for accountability have been met with redacted documents, shifting narratives and outright refusals. This has to end.

We owe it to Canadians to bring transparency back to governance, to hold those in power accountable and to get the House back to working on the issues that matter most to Canadians. It should be addressing the affordability crisis, getting more houses built, stopping crime and restoring public safety, to name just a few of these issues.

The reality is that many questions about what happened remain unanswered. Why has the Liberal government left the House paralyzed for two months, allowing no significant progress on the legislation? Why are they willing to forgo their own agenda in a minority parliament, in which time is critical? The only logical conclusion is that the truth buried in these documents is worse than a stalled legislative agenda. It must be very bad for the government to risk so much to keep it hidden.

This is not the first time the Liberals have resorted to such tactics. When faced with the WE Charity scandal, they prorogued Parliament. When questions arose about their poor management of security at the Winnipeg microbiology lab, they called an election to avoid releasing documents. Time and time again, they have chosen evasion rather than accountability. It is not a stretch to conclude that this is what is happening now. This has brought us to the place where we are today.

Let us continue with the matter at hand: the mismanagement of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or as many Canadians know it, the green slush fund. Because the Liberals are the ones who brought this forward, maybe it should be called the red slush fund. Established to foster innovation in sustainable technologies, SDTC was a promising initiative. However, under the government's watch, it has devolved into a symbol of cronyism and corruption.

The Auditor General's investigation into SDTC uncovered staggering governance failures: \$400 million in contracts tainted by conflicts of interest, \$123 million misappropriated, \$59 million awarded to ineligible projects and \$12 million handed out in outright conflicts of interest. Board members awarded funding to companies they owned or had financial stakes in. Public officials sat idly by as they witnessed 96 conflicts of interest.

Despite whistle-blowers' raising alarms, the government dragged its feet in addressing these issues. This is not just mismanagement; it is a betrayal of the public trust. The damage done to the public trust is immeasurable. When we demand transparency in the handling of these funds, this is not an exercise in political theatre. It is an effort to get justice for Canadians, who work hard every day, pay their taxes and expect their government to manage those funds responsibly.

● (1130)

How has the government responded? It has refused to comply with House orders to produce unredacted documents, thereby impeding a criminal investigation; this obstruction is completely unacceptable. Transparency is not a partisan issue. It is not right versus left. It is not Conservatives versus NDP-Liberals. It is a democratic necessity that is part of how our system works and how trust in the system is fostered.

A government that does not believe it is accountable to the people it is supposed to be serving will inevitably behave according to its beliefs. The Liberal government does not believe it owes Canadians transparency, so it denies them access to information about how their tax dollars are being spent. This principle carries into other aspects of governance. If the Liberals do not believe they must be accountable to Canadians on this matter, they certainly will not act any differently on other issues before us. We see the evidence of this today. Canadians are paying the price for the government's failures.

We can consider the state of affordability in this country. The cost of living has skyrocketed under the Liberal government. Housing costs have doubled, food prices have soared, and gas and home heating are more expensive than ever. Food banks are overwhelmed. Over two million Canadians visited food banks in March alone, for a shocking 90% increase since 2019. Families are skipping meals and buying less-nutritious food. Seniors on fixed incomes and children now make up a significant portion of those seeking help. This is a grim reality for far too many of our communities. This troubling trend proves true in my riding, where the Samaritan House food bank saw nearly 2,000 more people accessing their services in the last two years. Four in every 10 are children, and one in every 10 is a senior.

Privilege

Meanwhile, the Liberal government is preparing to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ per litre, 19%, driving up costs across the board. From the farmer who grows our food to the trucker who delivers it, every step of the supply chain is burdened by the tax; the costs are passed on to consumers. Canadians cannot afford these increases, yet the government continues to prioritize ideology over the real needs of families and individuals.

The housing crisis is another glaring failure of the government. Over the past nine years, housing costs have doubled. Where it once took 39% of household income to cover the costs of a home, today it takes nearly 60%. This is not sustainable. Young Canadians, many of whom should be looking forward to buying their first homes, are instead stuck living with their parents or renting indefinitely. For some, home ownership has become a distant dream.

The leader of the official opposition has proposed a common-sense solution: axing the federal GST on the construction of new homes priced under a million dollars. This policy would save Canadian homebuyers up to \$50,000 per home and generate 30,000 additional homes annually, stimulating the economy at the same time.

Why does the government refuse to implement such practical measures? Is it because it is too focused on defending its record of failure to consider solutions? Canadians deserve better.

Let us turn to crime for a moment. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, our once-safe towns and cities have become rife with crime and chaos. According to a new report, between 2014 and 2022, violent crime in Canada increased by 43.8%. This means that Canada's violent crime rate is 14% higher than that of the United States. On top of this, between 2014 and 2022, the property crime rate in Canada increased by 7%; it is 27% higher than the property crime rate in the U.S., which declined by 24.1% in the same years. On top of that, the number of property crimes in Canada was lower than that in the United States until the Prime Minister was elected in 2015.

● (1135)

Homicides are also up in Canada, increasing by 53.5% between 2014 and 2022. Online criminal behaviour is still rampant, including online crimes targeting children, yet the Liberals' only response has been to table two censorship bills forcing Canadians into a false choice between their safety and free expression. Behind these statistics are real people. There are families torn apart by loss, communities grappling with fear and victims left without justice. What has the Liberals' response been? It has been a radical catch-and-release policy that puts repeat violent offenders back on the streets.

Canadians deserve safe communities where children can play in parks without fear and seniors can walk home from the grocery store without looking over their shoulders. The Conservative plan is clear: It is to end the catch-and-release policies and impose jail, not bail, for repeat violent offenders. Only common-sense Conservatives will do this.

Let us consider the government's environmental record, especially in light of SDTC's failure to manage taxpayers' dollars for the promotion of green technology ethically and responsibly. Over nine years, the government claims to have spent \$100 billion on climate initiatives, yet the results are abysmal. Canada remains the only G7

country whose emissions have increased since the Paris Agreement. The only meaningful drops in emissions occurred during the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 lockdowns, circumstances unrelated to any government policy.

Let us talk about the net-zero accelerator fund, an \$8-billion initiative. Even the Auditor General found no evidence that this spending led to any measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. This is not just inefficiency; it is negligence. Canadians deserve accountability for every dollar spent, particularly when the stakes are as high as our environment and future.

The Liberals have tried to distract Canadians with a temporary, two-month tax cut and a \$250 cheque set to arrive next April, which they have now reneged on. These are not solutions. They are gimmicks. What Canadians need is real, lasting relief. The Conservative plan to permanently axe the carbon tax on everything forever and remove GST on new home construction would provide meaningful support to families.

I raise all these issues because they are important for all of us to see in the House. They are important to the people who sent us here. The House has work to do, and Canadians are counting on us to address the issues that have an impact on their daily lives. However, we find ourselves paralyzed by the Liberal government's refusal to be transparent and accountable. Transparency is the first step toward rebuilding trust. When the government hides behind redactions and delays, it sends a clear message to Canadians that it has something to hide.

The House cannot and should not turn a blind eye to such issues as the \$400-million green, or red, slush fund scandal. Canadians deserve better. They deserve a government that is transparent, accountable and focused on their well-being, not one that hides behind redactions and procedural games.

The SDTC scandal, with its conflicts of interest, mismanagement and failure to follow the law, is just the latest in a long line of troubling episodes. Instead of taking responsibility, the Liberal government continues to deflect, obfuscate and delay. Ministers refuse to provide the necessary documents to investigators, and government departments continue to withhold information from the public and the police.

Privilege

This kind of behaviour sends a dangerous message to Canadians: Those in power are not accountable to the people who elected them, and they can break the law without consequence. This is not just one scandal or one issue. It is about ensuring that the government works for the people, not insiders and political cronies. It is about making sure that every dollar spent is accounted for and that public funds are used wisely and effectively. It is about ensuring that those who violate the public's trust are held responsible for their actions, no matter their political affiliation.

I call on the government to end the cover-up and release the unredacted documents related to SDTC. Canadians have a right to know how their money is spent and who benefited from this mismanagement.

• (1140)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my condolences to the member opposite for drawing the short straw and having to read that 20-minute speech.

The member opposite talks about accountability and leadership accountability. If there is any one thing that is starting to increase in my riding, it is the concern that the leader of the party opposite will not get a security clearance. People are becoming more concerned.

Now we see the CBC report of potential foreign interference in the Conservative leadership contest. We heard things about that when it happened. That kind of went away, but now it is back in the news. My question for the member opposite is this: What is his leader hiding?

• (1145)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, if the member feels that way, being a Liberal member himself, he could call a carbon tax election, or put these unredacted documents into the hands of the officials who are making the decisions on why the government is not transparent, not accountable and obfuscating on all of these issues.

I am quite proud to be able to stand on this side of the House and do the work. As my colleague from Portage—Lisgar was saying earlier, this is important work, to the member's question. The Liberals are hiding behind their own leader's inability to give direction to this country, his own party or his officials to uncover the biggest scandal in Canadian history, to put it bluntly.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that a government is circling the bowl when it throws up all of these distractions. We are talking about a \$400-million scandal here, which 183 connected Liberal insiders benefited from as a result without any oversight for conflicts of interest. The very thing the Liberals said they came to Ottawa to do, which is to be transparent and accountable, they are now anything but. We are hearing this morning further distractions, rather than them being accountable and transparent to Canadians.

I wonder if the member can comment on this pattern of distraction, "Oh, look, a squirrel", which is the government's way of distracting. I will remind members as well that the Chinese Communist regime's interference in elections in this country is well documented on the side of the Liberal Party. That is another distraction it is trying to create.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for that excellent question, because he makes the point that I was trying to in this speech as well that everything the Liberals are doing these days is a distraction from what Canadians really expect them to do, which is to get to the bottom of why we had a Sustainable Development Technology Canada scandal in the first place, so we can get back to work on issues that matter.

I will just read a bit of the speech that I could not get done with when I was railing on some of the Liberal points that I was trying to make ad lib.

Let us ensure that Canadians have success for affordable housing. Let us lower the cost of living by axing the carbon tax and delivering common-sense solutions. Let us restore safety to our streets by ending catch-and-release policies. Above all, let us restore trust in government demonstrating transparency and accountability.

I think that is exactly what my hon. colleague from Barrie—Innisfil was speaking about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since my Conservative friends have had no qualms about monopolizing the House's resources for a month and a half now, I am sure that my colleague will not have a problem with the question that I am going to ask him, which has nothing to do with the speech that he gave.

We recently learned that French is the 11th most spoken language in Vancouver, the 12th most spoken language in Calgary and the 17th most spoken language in Toronto. What will a Conservative government do to reverse that trend, which shows that French is disappearing in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could get the member to repeat the question. It was not coming through in the translation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: I would be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Since my Conservative friends have had no qualms about repeating the same speech over and over again for the past month and a half, I am sure that my colleague will have no problem with me asking him a question that has nothing to do with his speech.

There are two official languages in this country, English and French. We recently learned that French is the 11th most spoken language in Vancouver, the 12th most spoken language in Calgary and, believe it or not, the 17th most spoken language in Toronto, Canada's largest officially bilingual city. Clearly, the Liberal government has failed to fulfill its obligation to protect French in this country.

French is dying out. What are the Conservatives going to do to reverse this trend?

Privilege

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his excellent question, and I apologize for not getting the translation right the first time.

I want to commend him for it, because in my own constituency, I have French communities. I grew up with and went to school with persons of French culture and heritage in my own little area of southwest Manitoba. We are certainly a bilingual province with St. Boniface and St. Vital.

My colleagues from all sides of the House acknowledge that in Manitoba and want to continue to get to the bottom of issues like this scandal, so that we can get on with important issues like what my colleague from Quebec just raised. One of the biggest issues is to provide accountability and respectability amongst all Canadians, and it does not matter what province we come from.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was troubled to read some remarks that the hon. member's leader made a few days back when he called municipal politicians "incompetent, greedy [and] money-hungry".

I was thinking about all of the municipal councils in the wonderful region that I represent, in places like Fort St. James, Fraser Lake, Burns Lake and Masset, small communities where people put their names forward in local elections and work for almost no money so that they can better their community. These are some of the most community-minded, selfless individuals in our country.

I wonder if the member could comment on the local governments and the local elected officials in his riding, and whether he feels, like his leader does, that they are "incompetent, greedy [and] money-hungry".

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, we just went through the Association of Manitoba Municipalities elections in Manitoba. We have a new vice-president who comes from my constituency, whom I respect very much.

It speaks to accountability in all levels of government. We have a situation here where if we were greedy and trying to confiscate things, it would refer to the Liberal government backed by the NDP, or we would have already had an election to get to the bottom of it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member can focus on the borderline contempt that the leader of the Conservative Party has entered into on a number of topics now.

In regard to the issue that the Conservatives want to talk about, the government is going to listen to the RCMP and the Auditor General over the self-serving Conservative Party's interest.

In regard to the security of Canadians and foreign interference, a very serious issue where we have seen murder, extortion and direct political interference in the leadership race in which he became the leader of the Conservative Party, could the member indicate why the leader of the Conservative Party continues to hide his past in order to prevent getting the security clearance?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. parliamentary secretary had listened to my speech, he would know that I said this is not a left or a right issue, it is about accountability for Canadian taxpayers' money.

The Liberal government has been distracting the Canadian public and the press away from just about everything except their own accountability for the last six months. It was prior to the House rising in June that these documents were to be presented. The ones the government presented were so blacked out, there was no point in even presenting them.

The Liberals are covering up the biggest \$400-million scandal in Canadian history, by their actions through the Sustainable Development Technology Canada board of directors that has not been accountable. The Liberals appointed all nine directors, and they are not taking accountability for it today. Why the cover-up?

• (1155)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree very much with my hon. colleague that the misspending and conflicts of interest at SDTC should be of concern to every parliamentarian. I agree very much that there should be accountability and that the government should disclose the documents.

My understanding is that, in his ruling, the Speaker ordered that this matter be referred to PROC, and then this House passed a motion asking that the government send documents directly to the RCMP. I understand some 29,000 pages of documents did go to the RCMP, albeit redacted.

The RCMP officers have stated that they are unwilling or uncomfortable receiving more documents, for various reasons. I am just wondering what my hon. colleague's response to that is. Does he think that the RCMP should receive documents that the officers say they do not want and that might compromise their investigation?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that the RCMP did not want any more documents. The RCMP does not have to have more documents; it just has to get the same ones it has, unredacted.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the chamber again today to talk about, once again, the green slush fund.

I am going to focus on one particular individual and on how the green slush fund has been a win-win-win for the environment minister while it has been a lose-lose-lose for Canadian taxpayers. Specifically, my focus will be on how the Liberal environment minister, propped up by the NDP, is directly tied to the green slush fund.

The environment minister was tied to the green slush fund before he became the environment minister, as he was a key player in it. While he has been the environment minister, and that is currently, he has owned shares in a company that benefited from the green slush fund and also added \$750 million of taxpayer money to the fund. The same minister who is contributing to the green slush fund is ruining our forest sector and natural resources while also benefiting from their demise.

Let us get into the matter. I am not going to use the minister's name, obviously, because we are in the chamber. How was the minister tied to the fund specifically before? Most people will remember the infamous picture of the environment minister in an orange jumpsuit. He was arrested after scaling the CN Tower to deliberately break the law, as "a tool", as he phrased it. That happened in 2001, just to give a reference for people's timeline, 23 years ago. Eight years after that moment, he would end up lobbying for a company called Cycle Capital. Most members know by now of Cycle Capital and how it has been involved in the green slush fund.

Most of the way through my speech, I will be quoting my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets, as he has done a lot of research into the issue and has really exposed a lot of what the green slush fund has become. Cycle Capital has a CEO who is also a member of the SDTC, or the green slush fund, board. Her name is Andrée-Lise Méthot. The member said:

One director was particularly aggressive.... She was appointed in 2016 by the Prime Minister. Her name [once again] is Andrée-Lise Méthot. She runs a venture capital firm called Cycle Capital, in green technologies. Andrée-Lise Méthot's companies, before and during her time on the board, received \$250 million in grants from the [green slush fund]...while she was on the board, \$114 million went to green companies that she had invested in.

At that time, who was her strategic counsel? Again, I cannot say his name in the House:

The current radical Liberal environment minister...proudly lists he was a strategic counsel for Cycle Capital for a decade before he was elected in 2019.

Guess what he did in that role? He was the paid in-house lobbyist. During his time as a paid lobbyist for Cycle Capital, Cycle Capital received \$172 million of the \$250 million that came out of the green slush fund. In the year and a half before [the environment minister] was elected in 2019, he lobbied the PMO and ISED 25 times, according to the lobbyist registry, on behalf of Cycle Capital, for SDTC [green slush fund] funds. He was a very successful lobbyist, obviously, and as part of [the environment minister]'s reward, he got shares as compensation in Cycle Capital.

I will be referring to the shares very soon.

Now let us move into the minister's term as the current environment minister. Shockingly, the minister still owns shares in Cycle Capital, but because of the government's not disclosing the documents, we do not know how much. That is really the reason we are here today, why the matter has gone on so long: The redacted documents, the green slush fund documents, that are being covered up today likely have covered up the current minister's involvement in the SDTC and also how much he is benefiting from it personally.

We know a much more direct number. We know that the minister is generally profiting from the green slush fund, but the documents would get a lot more specific and, I would add, a lot more damning as a result. What we do know is that the company he still owns shares in has directly benefited from the green slush fund, as said the member for South Shore—St. Margarets: "Cycle Capital, since

Privilege

Andrée-Lise Méthot was put on the board in 2016, tripled in value, from \$200 million to \$600 million." Again, the company the minister has shares in has multiplied in value by over 300%.

● (1200)

He also said that the fund itself massively expanded under the current Minister of the Environment; "as a cabinet minister of government, he participated in discussions that gave the green slush fund another [three-quarters of a billion dollars], \$750 million, of which over a quarter has gone to that company."

It was enough that the minister benefited as a lobbyist and as a shareholder in this particular company, but now that he is the minister, he is dumping money into the fund, which is benefiting the company he still has shares in. Most folks call that a conflict of interest. The commissioner calls it a conflict of interest and most Canadians call it a conflict of interest, but the government is covering it up.

Here is another quote:

Not only does the line extend from the Prime Minister's office, which hand-picked and appointed the chair over her conflicts, even though it was warned about them—the PCO has said that's where it came from—and not only has the Prime Minister's office tried to thwart the House of Commons by asking departments to redact their documents from the disclosure the House of Commons asked for from SDTC, but we have an actual minister of the Crown, who happens to be the minister of the environment, who might have some interest in SDTC and its performance and is actually financially gaining from it.

It does not get worse than this. Actually, I am going to argue that it does get worse. The minister has directly ensured that the fund his own company benefited from, as did his many Liberal friends, will remain well stocked with taxpayer dollars well into the future.

To conclude, there were a bunch of forestry closures, which I have been speaking about and have been doing videos about, in my home province of British Columbia. We have lost 24 mills since 2016. As part of the result of the minister, oil and gas is seeing its limitations with emissions caps. We even hear about indigenous chiefs of the Haisla, the Wet'suwet'en and others concerned about the emissions cap's limiting the prosperity of their people because it will limit any future liquefied natural gas expansion.

However, the same minister is doing his best to limit our resource development, ruin our forest sector, ruin our oil and gas sector with emissions caps, and bring in the carbon tax, which is making life unaffordable for all Canadians, while he is benefiting from the whole downturn and the demise of the resource sector himself. It is a shame.

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This is from a Business in Vancouver, BIV, article: “Canfor’s B.C. mill closures prompts call to stabilize timber supply.” This is one way the minister is limiting resource development: initiating and bringing in the 30 per cent by 2030 initiative. The article says, “What’s been limiting the timber supply lately is government policies, he said, including a moratorium on logging old growth stands, First Nation tenure transfers, a ‘30 by 30’ conservation goal, and eco-system based land management.”

The minister, of course, is all over this. He is one of the guys who are not just stopping at 30 by 30 but actually going on to 50 by 50. This is from the government itself, the minister’s statement, which reads:

The Government of Canada is also making progress toward achieving the 25 per cent by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030 targets for area-based conservation as our network of protected areas plays a vital role in conserving and restoring healthy, resilient ecosystems and contributing to the recovery of species at risk.

This week we’ll be announcing new funding for habitat stewardship as we continue our steady progress toward halting and reversing nature loss in Canada by 2030 and achieving a full recovery for nature by 2050.

It kind of speaks to the ambition of the minister that the initiative is not stopping at 2030. The 30 by 30 initiative has been damaging enough, and now he is going to go on to 50 by 50.

In addition, the emissions caps have been the talk of many of my colleagues in Alberta and British Columbia with respect to the oil and gas sector. My perspective is from northeastern B.C. Many people will be familiar with the largest capital project in Canadian history: LNG Canada. It takes gas from fields in my part of the province in northeastern B.C. and sends it down a pipeline to Kitimat to be exported to the world. By doing that we can actually reduce emissions around the world by up to 50%.

• (1205)

LNG has been a great story for Canada and a great story for us in northeastern B.C. It is also really a service to our allies asking for our natural gas. There have been many countries that have come to ask the Prime Minister for our natural gas, and he has brushed them off by saying there is no business case for it. I spoke about this at a natural resource forum in Prince George. There were a thousand people in the room, and everybody knows that saying there is no business case for natural gas is ridiculous. I asked the question in the room, and I think everybody applauded when I asked, “Is there a business case for natural gas?” Of course there is.

However, this is the same sort of strategic, deliberate getting in the way of resource development and expansion by the environment minister and his Prime Minister. This is what they are all about. Again, we are talking about emissions caps. The emissions cap they are putting on and continuing with will completely limit our ability to get more natural gas to the world that our allies are asking for.

The Minister of Environment himself said, “It’s an economic strategy as much as it is an environmental strategy.” Listen to the key word, “strategy”, which I will revisit in a minute. If what the minister is doing is strategic, because some people could accuse him of accidentally ruining the natural resource sector, let us take him at his word. If it is strategic, then it looks like he is deliberately ruining our natural resources sector in the country.

I will move to what the Minister of Environment has also been saying about the carbon tax. Of course, he is the same minister who has been the face of the carbon tax for the Prime Minister for the last number of years. He was promoting the carbon tax, saying at a House of Commons committee studying emissions policies, “Of course, we’re going to continue with the carbon tax because it creates jobs. It helps us to promote investment and reduce GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions”, investments that he himself was benefiting from in the green slush fund.

There is a key word there that is so significant. It just does not let the minister off the hook. It is bad enough that he is just taking taxpayer monies in an ethically wrong way. The quote actually says he strategically is doing that, and he is even admitting he is going to be personally benefiting from it: “Of course, we’re going to continue with carbon tax because it creates jobs”, which we all know is not true.

The minister told the House of Commons committee, and listen to these words about the carbon tax, “It helps us to promote investment”. The whole conversation is around the green slush fund. It is all around his questionable practices around Cycle Capital, which he personally is involved in, has personally directed money to feed into and has personally benefited from himself.

What makes it worse, for me, is that I go home to my constituents, who pay their bills either by forestry jobs or by working in the oil and gas sector, and theirs are good jobs that put warm meals on their table and a roof over their head. The same minister, who is strategically trying to ruin the natural gas sector and resource sector, including forestry, is the one who is actually personally benefiting from it as an individual.

The argument I am making today is that the minister needs a close look. It is not just that the NDP-Liberal government is trying to cover the issue up for random reasons. I think there is something a lot more sinister going on here and with who has actually benefited directly from the green slush fund. We already see directly that the minister has benefited, but we do not know by how much. That is why the documents are redacted, I believe.

How many shares does the minister have? How much are the shares worth? That is the mystery we all need to know. Canadians want to know. They deserve to know. The same person who sits across the way, the minister, and the one who sits beside him, the natural resources minister, together are ruining our country’s natural resource sector.

• (1210)

Since 2016, 24 mills have shut down. Our limit to get natural gas to the world has been capped by these two individuals, who have been backed and propped up by the Prime Minister. It is a shame. People need to understand that the environment minister is not only stopping it but also putting dollars in his own bank account by doing so. It is utterly shameful and needs to be exposed. That is why we have spent so much time in this place trying to get to the bottom of the issue, trying to get the unredacted documents and trying to get to the truth of what is going on with SDTC, or the green slush fund, as we call it.

In conclusion, the minister got rich before he was and he got richer as the environment minister. Canadians are losing their jobs and livelihoods because of the minister's radical policies and the shutting down of our natural resource economy. I started off by saying it has been a win-win-win for the current environment minister and, I would say, the natural resources minister and the Prime Minister. It has been a lose-lose-lose for Canadians and the Canadian taxpayers, who, frankly, pay all our wages in the House. It is shameful. I think Canadians out there are expecting us to get to the bottom of it. I know people watch these videos, and with the amount of views that we are getting, they really want to get to the bottom of this corruption.

The polls are reflecting how unpopular the current Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberals across the way are. Canadians are wanting a carbon tax election, and it is because of this kind of stuff and this kind of corruption. We have members from Calgary, members in this chamber, who have talked about the many levels of corruption that the government is involved in. It does not just stop with the green slush fund.

I will summarize the green slush fund for the folks watching out there. If they forgot about the amount of money that we are talking about here, we are not just talking about a few thousand dollars, and that would still be bad. As a quick summary of the scandal, first, at least \$390 million has gone to Liberal insiders, including the NDP-Liberal environment minister. Second, they are trying to hide what went on with that transaction and with the whole green slush fund. We know that countless board members of SDTC, the board members themselves, were directly involved in making decisions about who would get the money out of this board. They were making decisions and sending money to their own companies to benefit from those particular decisions, and \$400 million is already gone. The minister I referred to topped up the green slush fund with another three-quarters of a billion dollars.

Canadians are tired of this kind of corruption, and it is time for us to have a carbon tax election. I look forward to any questions members in the House will have.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government is going to listen to the Auditor General of Canada and the RCMP, not the Conservative Party, on this issue.

On the issue of foreign interference, let us be very clear. We are talking about extortion and about Canadians that have been murdered. There have been direct links to foreign interference in the leadership of the Conservative Party. The leader of the Conserva-

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tive Party chooses not to get the security clearance. Canadians have a right to know what it is that the leader of the Conservative Party is hiding from them. What has happened in his past? Canadians have a right to know.

We have found out that the member for Calgary Nose Hill was intimidated by foreign interference to the degree that she literally withdrew from the campaign of the leader of the Conservative Party's opponent. There are all sorts of things that are linked here.

Will the hon. member not, at the very least, acknowledge that the honest and honourable thing for the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada to do is to do what every other leader has done and get the security clearance required?

• (1215)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I am going to ask a question of the Canadians who are watching right now. The speech that I just made was about the green slush fund and how the current environment minister, before, during and after, has benefited from the green slush fund and is destroying our natural resource economy across the country. That was the topic I talked about at length.

The member across did not ask me one question about what the speech was about. I think what all Canadians are asking is why the current minister, who is deeply involved in this corruption, in this scandal, is still sitting on the front bench as environment minister today.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Government members who have debated today have been totally off topic. The member, in this case, gave a speech about why the SDTC process only helped insiders close to the Liberal government and those who benefited.

I have spoken a number of times about how, in my riding, constituents who were ruled ineligible to receive the Canada emergency response benefit were forced to pay back those monies. The Auditor General found that, with the SDTC green slush fund, there were ineligible companies as well. Does the member believe that those monies should be recovered by the government and those companies should pay back the money they were ineligible to receive in the first place?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, yes, I absolutely do believe that.

I talk to Canadian taxpayers every day. They come into my office talking about how the CRA is going after them for small amounts of taxes the CRA believes they should have paid. They are stressed and in tears. That money is all going to fund this kind of garbage and this kind of program where Liberals are lining the pockets of their friends with hundreds of millions of dollars. It is shameful, and the government should recover every last penny of the corrupt money that has been lost to date.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I respect the member greatly.

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There is a report today in the CBC, which states, “Agents of the Indian government allegedly attempted to derail [candidate's] campaign for the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2022, according to sources who spoke to Radio-Canada.” The article also states that the MP for Calgary Nose Hill “allegedly was pressured to withdraw her support for [that candidate]”, which she did.

One thing that is becoming more and more clear is that there is pressure on the leader opposite to get a security clearance. He is not doing it. Is there something he is hiding? That is my question.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I am talking today about the green slush fund. The member across the way, who I respect as well, was one of the members who has constantly said in front of cameras that he has a problem with the Prime Minister and would like him to move over. We could talk about that today, too, if the member would like, because he is not asking questions about what I am talking about. Maybe we could talk about that.

Why is the member across the way asking the Prime Minister and maybe the front bench in the cabinet to step down? Maybe it is because of things like this and the corruption that exists on the front bench, which he sits behind. Canadians are getting tired of the situation and the rampant corruption in the NDP-Liberal government today.

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that the debate is with respect to the privilege motion. I know there is some latitude, but if members could stay on topic, that would be good.

I would also ask members to please not intervene when their colleagues are speaking.

We will continue with questions and comments with the hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question this morning is right on point because it is about wasted money. That is really what we are talking about here today with this scandal.

I listened to my colleague give a great version of the events that have taken place. We are talking about ethics that have gone awry. There is \$400 million that has gone elsewhere while people across Canada are struggling. How much could the \$400 million have helped his residents?

Also, from what we are seeing in the Auditor General's report this morning, billions of dollars are perhaps now missing. Money is going out the window everywhere. What does the member think about that, and how much could this money be helping the residents of his riding?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, we just did a bunch of interviews with loggers in Fort St. John who will be losing their jobs right before Christmas. They will be struggling to put food on the table for a Christmas meal, let alone buy their kids any toys. I would say that that is even worse than the money.

Members can imagine somebody taking a person's wallet. That would be bad enough. The minister has come and taken their wallets, but he has taken their jobs as well. It is the worst of the worst,

and the fact that he is benefiting from that money and, at the same time, benefiting from the demise of our critical resource sector in this country is shameful. The minister needs to resign, and we need a carbon tax election today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the motion that we have before us today is all about having the issue brought over to PROC. No matter what the Conservatives want to say, the motion is about the leader of the Conservative Party and his borderline contempt of Parliament by continuing to filibuster for weeks now.

That borderline contempt is directly connected to the issue of foreign interference when we have a cowardly leader of the Conservative Party who is refusing to do the honourable thing and get the security clearance that is required to provide—

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. We have seen this place descend to a place where we do not want it to go, but this member knows better than to use the word “cowardly” to describe the Leader of the Opposition. He should retract that and apologize.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would withdraw the word “cowardly”.

The bottom line is that the leader of the Conservative Party has a moral obligation to Canadians to get that security clearance. Could the member give a clear indication as to why the leader of the official opposition refuses to do what every other leader does and get the security clearance so he can become better informed on foreign interference?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the only party guilty of contempt in the House is that of the NDP-Liberals across the way, which refuses to put forward the documents, unredacted, regarding the green slush fund. That is what we are here talking about today. The Liberals need to do that.

The Liberals need to be honest with Canadians and expose their own members who we are alleging are corrupt. From what we have seen come out of committee, they are corrupt. It is just how corrupt they are that is the question.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, watching the debate and watching the Liberals this morning, I cannot help but feel that this is a bit of a magician's act: “Oh look, a squirrel.” The Liberals are trying to distract from a lot of things.

This includes a real whopper this morning, which plays into the SDTC scandal. The Auditor General found that Accenture received \$313 million, or 92% of a total of \$342 million, in contracts awarded. This happened even though Accenture performed much of the work in Brazil instead of Canada, as the government has claimed. Does the hon. member agree that it is time to rid this country of the current government through a carbon tax election and get back to some normalcy and decency?

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• (1225)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, in juxtaposition of what the government has been doing for the last nine years, including corruption and sending money offshore when Canadians desperately needed it here, a Conservative government, under the leader from Carleton, would bring it home and would change the way things are done. We would bring home the Canada that we all know and love. I just appreciate the Canadians out there and their patience. We need a carbon tax election, and we need it today.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the good people of Calgary Midnapore.

I was very fortunate to have my annual general meeting this weekend. It was just so lovely to reconnect with so many supporters, so many constituents. They are also supporters of the leader of the official opposition. I am very lucky to have the mother of the leader of the official opposition in my riding. He was, of course, raised in Calgary Midnapore. I am so incredibly proud of that fact.

Indeed, many citizens expressed to me that they are very tired of the corruption of the government, of the fiscal mismanagement of the government. They are also looking forward to a carbon tax election, where finally we can return good governance to Canada and bring in the leader of the official opposition, the member for Carleton, as our prime minister. There are hopeful, happy days ahead, most definitely.

The point that I would like to raise today is just how ironic it is that, even though this is the third time that I am speaking to this motion, I actually have a new fresh list of scandals and corruption relative to the matter at hand, which is, of course, the green slush fund documents. I will start by saying, as I am sure members well know, that the leader of the official opposition has given me the honour and privilege of being the shadow minister for the Treasury Board, the President of the Treasury Board's counterpart.

Last week, the President of the Treasury Board made a lot of noise about the release of supply and whether supply would be released so that the government could continue. I think that the official opposition showed its goodwill in coming forward on the motions that were voted on late into the night on Thursday. However, if the President of the Treasury Board is listening, the fastest way that supply could be guaranteed would be to hand over the documents, frankly, to stop this charade of corruption and to really bring this to a close so that we can get on with the governing of Canada. We can work together to continue that, but as long as these documents are outstanding, we will have to continue to bring this to the attention of Canadians. That is how it is.

That was one incident that has occurred since the last time I spoke on this. As my other colleagues have mentioned, I was very fortunate this morning to be in the room at 7:30 to have a preview of the Auditor General reports. They are public now, so I can talk about them. There certainly were many damning features in the reports on the evaluations by the Auditor General. They included reports on defence procurement and that this procurement is not necessarily being timely or providing value for money. That is no surprise with the government. This is a theme we have seen. We have seen how the management of seniors' programs by the government

has been poorly handled. We have many seniors living below the poverty line as a result of the government's not being able to manage its programs for seniors.

Most notable, as my colleague mentioned, was the management of the CEBA program during the pandemic. It was a failure of the Minister of Finance. Interesting facts were unearthed in this audit by the Auditor General. Accenture is the company that awarded the contract to itself and provided the vast majority of its work from Brazil. Nine per cent of those who received the money were found to be ineligible. That is really something. Of the hundreds of millions of dollars that were handed out, 9% is really a significant amount. It is no surprise after what we saw with ArriveCAN, or the arrive scam, as we like to call it, that Accenture chose to award those funds to itself. It received \$313 million. In other words, 92% of the entire funds in contracts were awarded to those who were delivering CEBA.

• (1230)

Once again, in the Auditor General reports issued and announced this morning, we are seeing the incompetence of the government, with 9% of funds being given to ineligible recipients. Again, the same old fraudsters, scamsters and friends of the Liberal government are getting ahead. Accenture awarded 92% of the contracting to itself and then completed more than a large majority of that contracting out of country, and that is just what we learned this morning.

I have more mismanagement scandals to mention since the last time I was up here to speak. Of course, we have the two-month GST tax holiday. There are actually reports today in the news. The government certainly likes to talk about Conservatives following our leader. We are proud to support the member for Carleton, but he does, in fact, consult with us and take our opinions into account. I am not sure it is the same for members on the other side of the aisle, as I see some Liberals were not happy they did not get consulted regarding the two-month GST tax trick.

This is just another example of the corruption and mismanagement that we are seeing. Of course, this GST implementation is very unfortunate because it forces small businesses to have to make significant administrative changes for a brief period of time and then change them back. If we are talking about the mismanagement of funds, as we are here with the green slush fund, then we also need to mention the amount of government administration it will take to do this two-month tax trick.

Of course, we know if the Prime Minister were really concerned about the well-being of Canadians, he would just eliminate the carbon tax. He has not done that as of yet. Instead, he has just done this two-month tax trick. With this two-month tax trick, the carbon tax would be applied to heating, gas, groceries, farmers, those who deliver the food, the grocers who sell the food, etc. In this case, the Prime Minister took it upon himself to determine the items, specific to Canadians, for which the GST will be taken off, even though it is just for this minimal, two-month period of time.

Privilege

I think it speaks to the larger problem that we are discussing here, which is the fiscal and economic incompetency of the government, the mismanagement of funds relative to the green slush fund and the Liberals' withholding of documents.

Unfortunately, this goes beyond our borders. We had, of course, our neighbour to the south, the President-elect, indicate that he was going to slap Canada with a 25% tax. The Prime Minister went down to have a conversation with the President-elect, and he did what he does best, which is take selfies with individuals. He did the same thing and was really happy to share this selfie with the world, but he came back empty-handed, as was indicated by my leader, the member for Carleton. This just shows the mismanagement of money and the mismanagement of our economy, and the green slush fund is just one example of that.

I have used the first half of my speech to talk about the new scandals and new mismanagement that has occurred, everything from Liberal insiders getting rich with the handing over of \$312 million of contracts and expenditures to the two-month tax trick. All of these things are new things since the last time I was here to make some points about the green slush fund.

The 25% tariff would come at a terrible time. As I am sure everyone is aware, the Parliamentary Budget Officer expects the federal government to have a deficit of \$46.8 billion in fiscal year 2023-24. That is deeper than the \$40 billion forecasted by the finance minister in the April budget. This is no surprise.

• (1235)

In reviewing some of the documents in the Auditor General's report this morning, it was astounding that some of these initiatives that departments were mandated were not achieved because they did not have the funding. My mind struggles to understand. If the government runs a \$46.8-billion deficit, how could it not achieve its mandates? It is one thing to make the decisions and to promise things to Canadians, but then to break these promises is another. A lot of times, as in the issue we are discussing here, which is the inability to hand over the documents, it can be corruption, but in other cases it is just poor planning and mismanagement.

Again, in reading these Auditor General reports this morning, I was left to wonder whether it is mismanagement. Yes, in some cases I think it is, but again, in the case of Accenture, I think it might be another case of a conflict of interest whereby Liberals are giving money to their friends.

The Conservative opposition has been fantastic in terms of exposing different areas of not only mismanagement but, frankly, poor governance. Another example that comes to mind, in addition to the green slush fund, is how the Liberal government ignored scientists and residents on wildfire risk to Jasper. I think our team did an incredible job of unearthing that. I see the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, who did fantastic work on it, as did the member for Red Deer—Lacombe and the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland.

I talked at the beginning about how my constituents, at an annual general meeting this weekend, expressed to me their interest in having a carbon tax election. Speaking of the carbon tax, this is another situation where the government refused to hand over documents.

The Liberals declined to release their internal analysis of the economic impacts of carbon pricing and refused to say why they were keeping the data secret, even as they criticized the federal budget watchdog for an error in his analysis of the policy. This is another situation where the government did not hand over documents, similar to the situation we have today.

There are so many examples of the government not handing over documents that I do not even know which to choose. Another is the WE Charity. I am going back to the Liberal government previous to the current government, where it released thousands of pages of documents related to the WE matter, as the committee requested, but rather than have the independent law clerk redact information, such as cabinet confidences and personal information, the various departments responsible for this program did the blackouts themselves, which was an apparent contravention of the committee's request.

A spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office said that the redactions were done by the parliamentary law clerk, who was following the committee's direction to remove documents covered by cabinet confidentiality and personal information about Canadian citizens. However, the law clerk said in a confidential August 18 letter to the clerk of the finance committee that the vast majority of the blackouts had been done by government bureaucrats. I wonder: Under whose direction?

Another situation where we did not receive documents was one I worked on intensely, the ArriveCAN scandal. This was where the Canada Border Services Agency missed the deadline to hand over ArriveCAN invoices and declined to identify subcontractors. I feel as though this is a theme within the government: declining to identify subcontractors in addition to not handing over documents.

• (1240)

I am very grateful that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is doing such good work on indigenous procurement, because this is similar. We want to ensure that subcontractors and their practices are also evaluated to ensure they meet government guidelines, rules and regulations.

Of course, the terrible finale of the ArriveCAN scandal was when we had one of the two partners of GC Strategies, Mr. Kristian Firth, here at the bar, in front of Parliament. This is just another example of the lack of oversight of the government and the amount of corruption that we continue to talk about in the House today.

We also have the situation with the Winnipeg labs where the documents were not handed over. Again, these are the most extreme and delicate of cases, when we look at our national security. In fact, as per usual, the New Democratic Party worked with the Liberals in an effort to shut down a hearing on the Prime Minister's Winnipeg lab documents scandal. The documents detailed the infiltration of Canada's highest security lab.

Privilege

The Prime Minister defied four orders of Parliament and took the House of Commons to court to block the release of these documents. In fact, that was the only time a sitting Prime Minister had done this in Canadian history. Again, this is another example where the government and the Prime Minister went out of their way, as we continue to discuss here today, on the handing over of documents and the covering up of information.

The Prime Minister's attempts to cover up interference at Canada's most secure lab has put the safety and security of Canadians at risk. In 2019, it was revealed scientists working at Canada's high security lab were collaborating clandestinely with the People's Republic of China. Alarm bells were first rung in August 2018, and it took 10 months for these scientists to be marched out of the lab, 10 months after parliamentarians first asked for these documents to be released and the Liberal government refused. Again, we have so many examples here.

Another example of where the Liberals have avoided responsibility would be the purchase of the \$9 million residence in New York. We know that Tom Clark approached his good friend, the Prime Minister, and asked for a change of residence. Again, the government is passing off this blame and is not taking responsibility. It is passing it onto the bureaucrats when it needs to, once again, take responsibility.

There are endless examples. It is just excuses. As I said, the more recent examples in my speech have happened over the last nine years. However, if we look at just today, we have the CEBA situation, defence procurement, seniors living below the poverty line. Then, this week alone, there is the two-month tax trick and the unwillingness to do anything regarding the 25% tariff from our neighbours to the south.

I will close with this. Aristotle said that character is revealed through actions. Time and again, the government has revealed its poor character. Since I gave a similar speech on this same subject not long ago, it has remained the same.

• (1245)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite spoke about character. I am curious as to how she feels about the CBC story breaking today, that India allegedly interfered in the leadership race and that members of her own caucus were encouraged to step down from helping any leader other than their current leader.

If we are talking about character, then how does the member opposite respond to these allegations that their official leader could not win that leadership election unless there was a finger on the scale?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I was very proud to serve as the Alberta campaign chair for the member for Carleton. I can tell the member that we swept Alberta, so I am not concerned at all about the support and tipping the scale. It sounds absolutely ridiculous. It is unfortunate that she would say such things about that. Again, it speaks to the desperation of the Liberal government.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I also had, coincidentally, an annual general meeting in Vancouver Kingsway this weekend. What I heard from the people who attended my meeting was just how desperately people are struggling right now. The figures back that up: 50% of Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque; one in four parents, according to the Salvation Army, are cutting down on their food intake so that they have enough food for their children; and 80% of Canadians are worried about the holiday spending coming up, yet my hon. colleague voted against a GST cut that would reduce the expenses of an average family by several hundred dollars.

I was in the House last week when the Conservatives called that chump change. I wonder if she agrees with that. Does she think that saving an average family a couple hundred dollars this Christmas is chump change? Everybody in this place earns over \$200,000 a year. Does she not agree with me that it shows a disdain for the working and poor people in our country that is unbecoming to this chamber?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I like the colleague and appreciate him, but that is so rich coming from someone whose leader is just holding on to the horrible current government in an effort to get his pension. It is really hard for me to hear that question.

I genuinely do not believe that the New Democratic Party understands economics. The Conservatives understand that the administration of this two-month tax trick alone would create more administrative burden that would put a greater tax burden on Canadians just with the program itself. We would be far better off implementing a carbon tax removal across the board.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her outstanding work on OGGO.

I notice that every time the Liberals get up, they are trying to distract from the actual topic at hand, which is to produce the documents for this green slush fund. It seems they must have something to hide. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

• (1250)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, as a member of the government operations committee, the government will go to any lengths to hide anything. We have found that time and again, whether it is its work with McKinsey or ArriveCAN. We are going to have to look into Accenture now and see what happened. There is indigenous procurement. The government knows no limits when it comes to covering up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have kept us from getting our work done for the past month and a half, so I am going to go ahead and do some work.

Privilege

We saw some rather disturbing footage this morning. A homeless encampment was dismantled on Notre-Dame Street in Montreal. The number of homeless people has doubled in Quebec in the past five years. Three times as many people die on the street in Quebec compared to five years ago. We definitely have a problem.

The current government cut funding by 3% for the only program that helps the homeless, the Reaching Home program. I want to know what the Conservatives plan to do to end homelessness in this country if they ever get into power, which we do not want them to do.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it is obvious that the government wants to spend money. The problem is what it spends that money on. We know that the Conservative leader has four priorities, namely to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. People can expect good changes from a Conservative government with the member for Carleton as the prime minister of Canada.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the party opposite has about 80 pages of speech that they hand from member to member. It is almost like a fruitcake at Christmas, going around from house to house.

The member opposite speaks about accountability and transparency, so here is my question: Where is the transparency with the leader of the opposition with respect to his clearance? He refuses to get it, and more and more Canadians are wondering why he is refusing to do that.

Second, what is up with the allegations of foreign interference with respect to his leadership bid? Could the member opposite comment on that?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, first, no one likes fruitcake and no one likes the scandal and corruption of the Liberal government.

We all know that the government should just release the names, and the member for Carleton knows that. The member for Carleton knows that if he receives a clearance, it will be the clearance that the Prime Minister wants to give him. He would like the same briefing that The Washington Post received, but he will not receive that from the Prime Minister. Then he will not be able to speak on the information he has received. It would be far more transparent if the government would release the names, but it is not willing to do that.

As for the comment on the foreign interference, the member for Calgary Nose Hill gave a very eloquent statement today and she stated exactly the truth. She is far too experienced a parliamentarian to ever be involved in a situation like this. Of course, the Liberals do not like to listen to her words, because they do not like to listen to the Conservatives and even less to strong Conservative women. This is just the same case.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my speech this morning, I talked about accountability and transparency. I will ask my colleague about what she just mentioned about transparency and accountability. As much as I may like fruitcake more than she does, a couple of people across the

way are acting like squirrels chasing nuts around. They are trying to pick up the nuts and put them in a tree so that they can be dealt with after the next election. We will deal with it after the next election.

However, there is a real conflict of interest here, and maybe this is why they are trying to distract us. We have already seen one minister who has been taken out of the government. We are very concerned about the fact that there may be more ministers. If the SDTC scandal is unveiled, more ministers across the way will be fired.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

• (1255)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, for weeks and weeks, the former minister of employment sat here and defended himself. In fact, the Prime Minister defended him as well until he had to release him in absolute shame over identity fraud essentially. Even leading up to that identity fraud, it was just a series of moral lapses.

Where there is smoke there is fire. I have no doubt that there are so many more fires burning on the other side of the aisle, and I say that with a heavy heart. I hope I do not have to speak on this for a fourth time, but this is where the government has left me and Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to resuming debate, there are a lot of questions and some discussions being had that are not really related to the privilege motion. Maybe if people can do the link to the privilege motion as they ask questions or make statements that would be very helpful. It would be good if they were on the privilege motion or the amendments.

On a point of order, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[Translation]

ALLEGED INTIMIDATION DURING PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to add a few things to the excellent question of privilege that was raised by the member for London—Fanshawe on Friday. I know that the Speaker will address this question of privilege in the coming days, and I wanted to add new elements and raise some important points.

The member for London—Fanshawe spoke about Standing Order 16(1), which is on decorum. I will read it: “When the Speaker is putting a question, no member shall enter, walk out of or across the House, or make any noise or disturbance.” That is precisely what happened on Thursday. It was a sad evening in the history of our Parliament. There was utter chaos.

Also, the member for London—Fanshawe read an excerpt from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which is our procedural bible. In chapter, 3, page 107, it states:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. Assaulting, threatening, or insulting a Member during a proceeding of Parliament, or while the Member is circulating within the Parliamentary Precinct, is a violation of the rights of Parliament.

She also cited Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, chapter 12, page 241, which states, "Any form of intimidation of a Member with respect to the Member's actions during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt."

When we consider all these aspects, there is no doubt that this is indeed a prima facie question of privilege.

[English]

I would like to add what the Chair could have done, the powers given to the Chair, from a ruling made on March 30, 2000, by the former deputy speaker Peter Milliken, who said the following when there was disorder during a vote in the House of Commons, which is a key part of our work. Deputy Speaker Milliken said, "The Chair will say that if members persist in...some other demonstration of that kind which is inappropriate in the House, the Chair will have no reluctance in directing the clerk to strike the hon. member's name from the list of those who have voted and continue to strike it if the conduct persists and, if necessary, take further measures."

It is very clear that the Speaker could have intervened in what was an absolute collapse of order in the House of Commons during the vote. The member for London—Fanshawe was very clear, as I believe other members have been; they could not even hear whether their name had been called for the vote. That is clearly stopping their ability to do their work.

We need to get to the real issue here, and I am citing Speaker Regan on November 20, 2018, on the use of alcohol in the House of Commons. He said at that time, in the Speaker's ruling, that "it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that Parliament is a healthy and safe workplace for everyone."

By no means all Conservative MPs, but some Conservative MPs, had very clearly consumed alcohol before they came into the House. That is something that is strictly prohibited in any workplace. I have worked in factories. I have worked in an oil refinery and in breweries. In no place is it acceptable to come to work having consumed alcohol, especially in excess. In the oil refinery where I worked, if somebody had come to work drunk, they would have been summarily fired because not only are they putting at risk their own lives in a very dangerous work environment, but they are putting in jeopardy the lives of others in the workplace. It is completely unacceptable.

As you were aware, Madam Speaker, because the Speaker's office was notified, the pages were withdrawn from the opposition lobby because of safety issues. What an unbelievable circumstance, that the pages who do such incredible work for us, who are part of the work we do each and every day, had to be withdrawn because of the drunk and disorderly conduct of some Conservative MPs. It is absolutely unacceptable that this situation happened and it is unbelievable to me that we have not had Conservative MPs standing and profusely apologizing for their conduct on Thursday night.

• (1300)

I also want to say that the Speaker could have taken action and chose not to on Thursday night, and I find that extremely disappointing.

Privilege

The reality is that whips have an important role in the House of Commons, and it is a codified role. I want to reference appendix II of the Standing Orders. The whip's role with regard to dealing with allegations of harassment is explicit in the code of conduct for members of the House of Commons. Whips have a semi-codified role with regard to managing the conduct of their members and the appropriateness of their behaviour. For the whip to allow visibly drunk members of the Conservative caucus to come into the House of Commons and disrupt the proceedings in a drunk and disorderly fashion is absolutely unacceptable, and the whip bears responsibility as well.

When the member for London—Fanshawe rose on Friday and offered a very fulsome and well-thought-out question of privilege, we saw a number of Conservative MPs rise and spew misinformation and not a single one of them ever responded to the question of privilege. They did not cite a single standing order or a single citation from our procedural bible because they cannot. If they try to do the same thing now, unless they are citing standing orders or citing aspects of the procedural bible that governs our activities, they should not be able to go on at length spewing misinformation.

My final point is this: In the coming days, the Speaker will be asked to make a decision on this. In my mind, there is no doubt this is a prima facie case of privilege that should come to the House and then the House can decide whether the matter gets referred to the procedure and House affairs committee.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, also on this point of order, I would like to respond to the information presented by my colleague.

I will start with the argument the member made at the end, regarding Conservative MPs factually laying out the case of intimidation, and very bad behaviour by NDP MPs in the House, which included several members of the NDP caucus aggressively gesticulating to a seated Conservative member. The member for New Westminster—Burnaby made an assertion that this was misinformation. I would draw the Speaker's attention to a video on the Twitter feed of one of my colleagues, which clearly shows this did happen. As of right now, the video has been viewed over 600,000 times on various platforms. I present this formally as evidence to refute the assertion of my colleague that somehow stating the behaviour of NDP MPs is misinformation; there is video evidence of what the NDP MPs did.

The second thing the member tried to do was state that, in response to a question of privilege where somebody makes an assertion, we should be censored. I reject that.

Privilege

Again, with regard to this particular question of privilege, I would reiterate that the video evidence that has been widely disseminated is not of Conservative MPs behaving badly; it is clearly of the NDP. There is a lot of pressure in this place right now. There are a lot of people saying things and I understand it. I understand the NDP and the Liberal government are facing a lot of heat from the Canadian people. The Conservative caucus was not even going to release this video. We took video evidence of it because it was so preposterous, but we thought, “We are not going to raise the temperature in the House.”

What has happened and what I would like the Speaker to consider is that the NDP was literally caught on camera. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians have seen the NDP. There were at least four MPs, three for sure, who were waving hands in my colleague's face. I must commend him for his neutrality and poise in the situation. Madam Speaker, if you look at that video evidence, you will notice my colleague was incredibly poised. He was incredibly in control of himself.

I would just flip the narrative back to where it needs to be. A person from the NDP has gotten caught, with his whip. The member talked about our whip, but it was his whip, so I will use his argument against him. He said it is incumbent upon the whip to maintain decorum and order in the House. Well, it was his whip who was actually caught on video waving a finger like this and repeating these phrases ad nauseam over my colleague.

• (1305)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am not the whip. I would like the member to know that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate.

The intent is to bring new information forward to be considered prior to the decision being made. I will allow the hon. member to bring the additional information forward, which will be taken into consideration.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I would ask, Madam Speaker, regarding your consideration of this matter, to underscore that the irrefutable evidence that has been presented to the House is that the NDP aggressively stormed the Chair and then aggressively gesticulated at and intimidated members of the Conservative caucus. That is what happened.

In terms of new information, I would reiterate that I believe it is incumbent upon all of us to make this place work. The NDP suggests the video evidence presented to hundreds of thousands of Canadians is misinformation. Let us not do that. That is embarrassing.

Perhaps New Democrats, like the Conservative caucus, could be part of bringing the light, not the heat, to Parliament.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the additional information that has been presented. We will certainly be looking into this further.

I remind hon. members that Speakers look at videos from the House and do not go to individual people's feeds to look for videos.

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, of the amendment as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I cannot believe that I am back here today to speak about this motion. I think I spoke to this motion maybe three-plus weeks ago. It could have been four weeks ago. All of this could end if the government simply released the documents. It has stubbornly refused to do so. I can only come up with one reason. In my background as a lawyer, there is only one reason to hide something. The reason we are going to hide something is because it is so bad and so damning that clogging up the House of Commons so that no other work gets done is actually the preferable option.

We have to think about that for a minute. Liberals could have released the documents three and a half or four weeks ago and gotten on with their so-called agenda. I think it is a terrible agenda, and I think it has brought us to where we are as a country, where rent has doubled, housing prices have doubled, one in four Canadian parents are skipping meals for their children and two million people are going to food banks. We think it is a terrible agenda, as do most Canadians.

The NDP-Liberals are in a coalition. They are not. I cannot keep track. The NDP keeps voting confidence in them, so I guess they are still in an agreement, but maybe they are not, because the NDP leader ripped up the agreement but keeps voting support, so I do not know. I digress.

The NDP-Liberal government has an agenda that it thinks is working. Objectively, it is not but it thinks it is. The Liberals' decision has been that they are not going to bring forward their agenda at all because they will not release these documents. Any reasonable person has to ask themselves this very simple question. Why are they working so hard to hide these documents? A reasonable person, any person, would have to come to the same conclusion that we have, that these documents are so damning, that they are such an indictment of the government and the minister in charge, they will move heaven and earth not to release the documents. It is legitimately the only thing we can be left with. This is a scandal-plagued government. We know that. We have had a minister recently resign for a raft of scandals. He took off out of here under a cloud of scandal. Let me say that this will be worse.

Privilege

It is across the entire breadth and scope of the government. We just heard today, from the Auditor General, about the CEBA business loans. There was \$3.5 billion to 77,000 recipients who were not eligible. There might be some NDP-Liberals over there asking what that has to do with this. It is because this is exactly what happened at SDTC. A whole bunch of Liberal insiders got money with a process that was not the normal process. It was just a printing press for Liberal insiders. We have now looked at the CEBA business loans and we are finding the same thing. Again, this is why they try to cover up everything, because they know the truth is so damning to their incompetence and their corruption.

What is even worse, what the Auditor General revealed today is that the whole CEBA loan process was administered by Accenture in a non-competitive process. The government just gave it the contract. It gave it \$313 million out of the \$342-million worth of contracts awarded. Guess what? Most of the work it did was done in Brazil. It did not even benefit Canadians. We would think a Canadian program that is being managed by a Canadian company would actually be administered by Canadians. It makes little sense to me. It does not make sense to these guys because literally nothing they do makes sense.

As far as these kinds of scandals are concerned, it is kind of a strange place that we are in right now here in Canada. Every week, there is a new scandal that should bring down a government.

● (1310)

It has become so commonplace for the Liberals to be caught with their fingers in the cookie jar that it is hard to shock people, but Canadians should be shocked with how they have behaved with respect to these contracts. Just to reiterate, the Auditor General found in the green slush fund that 82% of the contracts were awarded inappropriately. Now that is an A-. When I was in school, if I got an A- I would be pretty excited. The Liberals have an A- in corruption. I suspect that if they keep working hard at it like they are, they could get that grade up to an A or an A+ before the next election, something they should be really proud of. That is probably what they are working hard on, going forward.

Why are we pressing so hard for these documents? It is because we know these documents are going to be so bad for the government that we have said we will keep debating this issue until it produces them. I am going to read a quote from a whistle-blower on this case so that Canadians who are watching can understand exactly why we are working so hard to get these documents produced. One of the whistle-blowers said that, "The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government". That is the NDP-Liberal government, the people over there, "whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up...over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference." Let us think about that for a second. That was from a brave whistle-blower who took a risk to expose the corruption. The words used are incredibly powerful and damning. The person went on to say that, "It should never have taken two years for the issues to reach this point. What should have been a straightforward process turned into a bureaucratic nightmare that allowed SDTC to continue wasting millions of dollars and abusing countless employees over the last year."

If we had a government that was not corrupt, someone would have been held accountable. I remember a time when there was this thing called ministerial accountability. Ministers who were found to have engaged in egregious conduct had the honour of resigning. What has happened here? The absolute opposite has happened. What has happened at SDTC is an ongoing, unfolding scandal. A scandal, according to one whistle-blower, that is an indictment of our democratic systems, and our "institutions are being corrupted by political influence", all to award juicy, big, fat contracts from Liberal insiders to Liberal businesses from a program that was supposed to be monitored by a Liberal minister.

There are two things that could have happened. First, the minister is absolutely incompetent. Okay, so fire that incompetent minister, right? A minister who allowed this to take place is de facto incompetent. It is their department; they are responsible. There is this thing called ministerial responsibility. If somebody is an incompetent minister and they allow a raft of corruption to take place, corruption so much that it threatens our democratic systems and our institutions, that minister is incompetent and should have resigned. If the minister did not have the honour to resign, they should have been fired. That is scenario number one. Scenario number two, which is a little bit darker, is that the minister actually knew the corruption was taking place, and decided to do nothing.

We must ask ourselves this question. We are four weeks into demanding the release of the documents. The Liberals' entire political agenda has ground to a halt as a result of this. Let us think about the two options that I just presented. Was it that the minister was incompetent, so they are trying to protect incompetence? I do not think so.

● (1315)

Scenario two is the real scenario, that there was widespread corruption that the minister had to have been aware of and turned a blind eye to, just like the whistle-blower said, which is why the Liberals will fight tooth and nail not to release the documents, because they will show how systematic and systemic the corruption in this program was, and that it reached the highest levels of this government. Therefore, they will not release these documents under any circumstances, which is the sad but accurate state of affairs with this NDP-Liberal government.

Privilege

These NDP-Liberals keep saying is, “Oh, there's no criminality; the Auditor General didn't find any criminality”, and that is true; it is one of the very few accurate statements we get. However, here is what a whistle-blower said about this: “Just as I was always confident that the Auditor General would confirm the financial mismanagement at SDTC, I remain equally confident that the RCMP will substantiate the criminal activities that occurred within the organization.” The whistle-blower is saying that they are confident that the RCMP will find criminal wrongdoing.

Let us go back to the scenarios I was just talking about before. We have two possible scenarios here on why the Liberals are not releasing the documents. Scenario one, as I said, is that we have a completely incompetent minister who allowed a whole bunch of bad apples to run rampant through this program, doling out cash and making it rain for all of their Liberal insiders and buddies. Scenario two is that we have widespread corruption. Do members remember the sponsorship scandal that brought the end to the previous Liberal government, with people stuffing money in little bags going around the place? The Liberals tried to deny that as well, if I recall. They said, “Oh, there's nothing to see here.” Well, there was a lot to see. So, the second scenario, again, with what this whistle-blower is saying, is that there was criminality.

If there was criminality, why do the Liberals want to hide the documents? We have to keep asking this question. This whistle-blower is saying that they are equally confident that there will be criminality found. Why would this person say that? It is because they obviously witnessed the criminality. Now, the criminality could have been from the people at the department, which may well very have been the case, but if that was the case, why would the Liberals not just release the documents, because they do not have absolute control over the people who work there? The only reason they would be hiding documents that likely would have criminality involved is because the criminality just keeps moving up the food chain to people who knew, and that is the reason why they are refusing to release these documents, and why they have paralyzed this Parliament for the last four weeks in their absolute obstinance to release the documents.

They are so desperate to cover this up that they might have this go on for the next 15 months. Why? They know that the documents will bring an end to their government; they are that damning. It is the only explanation that I can see. Again, the Liberals said that there was no criminality, which is one of their defences in this. Then they said that there was no criminal intent, which is the other one. Well, it is interesting because there was a whistle-blower who talked about criminal intent; imagine that. The whistle-blower said, “I know that the federal government, like the minister, has continued saying that there was no criminal intent and nothing was found, but I think the committee would agree that they're not to be trusted on this situation.”

Sometimes we get real pearls of wisdom from people who come forward and make statements on this. I think the committee would agree that the Liberals are not to be trusted on this situation. However, what this Liberal government is asking Canadians to do is to trust it on these documents. We have produced documents and we have redacted 80%, or whatever it is, of the documents: “Just trust us. There is nothing damning in these redactions. It's just standard

procedure.” I think what we have learned from these NDP-Liberals is that they absolutely cannot be trusted with these kinds of documents.

We heard way back in the day with respect to Jody Wilson-Raybould that the story in *The Globe and Mail* was false. Do members remember that was what the Prime Minister said? Then, remarkably, the story was actually true.

● (1320)

When we look at whether the Liberals should be trusted on this, I think there is no one who still wants to trust them. There might be a few hard-core Liberal supporters in downtown Toronto, but anywhere else in the country, the trust in these guys is at zero, as it should be.

The whistle-blower, Witness 1, goes on to say, “I would happily agree to whatever the findings are by the RCMP, but I...wouldn't trust that there isn't any criminality unless the RCMP is given full authority to investigate.”

Again, the whistle-blower is saying that they cannot trust them, that they think there is criminality here and that the RCMP should investigate for criminality. We go back to asking ourselves why they will not release the documents. I have said this several times, but it is really important that this point hits home: They will not release the documents, despite four-plus weeks of not getting their agenda through Parliament, because they just know the degree of criminality that is going to be found in these documents and how damning it will be for their government.

I will phrase this in a way that everyone can understand. The government has been mired in scandals for the past two years. It is not new to scandal; it is not something new or shocking. One would think that, at a certain point, the Liberals would say that another scandal is no big deal. They would just get those documents out and say it would blow over in a couple of weeks.

However, they do not. The Liberals are still obstructing Parliament and not producing the documents. It goes back to the fact that this is not an everyday, run-of-the-mill scandal. It is actually really sad when we have to say that phrase, “not an everyday, run-of-the-mill scandal” by a government. It is because of how many scandals and how corrupt the government has been proven to be that we get to use that phrase.

It is not a run-of-the-mill scandal, however, or the Liberals would just release the documents. They would do what they normally do: a Friday evening document dump. We all know it. That is when the government takes out the trash. It puts something out at 5 p.m. on a Friday, usually on a long weekend, such as Thanksgiving or the August long weekend, because the Liberals know Canadians are not paying attention.

Privilege

However, the government did not even do a document dump on this. Again, it is because the Liberals know that what is in these documents will bring about the end of the government. We know there is going to be an end. When we have a carbon tax election, which is coming, that will be the end for the Liberals. They just want to desperately hold on as long as they can.

The NDP wants to hold on as long as it can because the leader needs his pension. That is why the NDP keeps propping up the Liberals at every opportunity. The New Democrats say they ripped up the agreement, but they prop the Liberals up. Unfortunately, the government is going to keep going. If it released these documents, it would actually be the end. Even the NDP would not be able to prop the Liberals up anymore, because the documents are so bad. That is why they are not releasing the documents. It is why we are where we are today. It brings me no joy to be here speaking about this another time. The Liberals have made this choice.

The conflicts that go on in this program are really unbelievable. We now have another minister mired in scandal. First, we have the minister who was responsible for SDTC; we have come to the conclusion that he is either incompetent or involved in this scheme. We now also have the Minister of Environment, who was a strategic adviser for Cycle Capital Management, which got a whole bunch of money from the green slush fund. I wonder how that happened. Given that point, I wonder why the Liberals do not want to release the documents. There are at least two ministers who we know will be very badly exposed by the documents.

I will end with this: This has gone on long enough. It is very simple. All the Liberals have to do is release the unredacted documents, and we can get back to the business of the House.

• (1325)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite spoke about corruption and the importance of whistleblowers. I want to give the member the opportunity, right here today, to come forward before we hear testimony from the former leadership candidate he supported. In March 2022, he supported Patrick Brown for the leadership of the Conservative Party. However, by June of the same year, he switched to the current Leader of the Opposition.

Can the member come clean here today? Was he approached? Was there foreign interference that asked him to step aside? There will be testimony coming forward on this before December 10. He has the opportunity to tell the House today: Was he coerced? Was he being influenced to switch his leadership support?

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

Again, I want to ask members to please make sure that they indicate how their question is linked to the question of privilege.

I see the hon. member is standing up. I will give him the opportunity to respond. The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, that is a disgusting slur even for the member, who always sinks to the bottom of the barrel when she asks a question.

I supported Patrick Brown because I have known him for 20 years. Throughout the course of the campaign, as his campaign platform was unrolled, I realized that his vision of Canada did not match mine. I believed in the Leader of the Opposition's platform. I had a conversation and asked if I could come over and support the current leader of the Conservative Party, and then I did.

The member cannot even defend what the government has done by asking a question about the matters before us. Instead, she sinks into the gutter to try to cast aspersions on my character. It is disgusting, but, unfortunately, it is what I expect from her.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, this morning, my hon. colleague spoke of the important duty of a government to disclose documents after Parliament has requested them. Of course, I agree with that very much.

The member took the present government to task for not disclosing the documents that have been ordered by the House. He was in the House between 2011 and 2015, as was I, when the government of Stephen Harper was order to do so twice, once to produce documents for the Afghan detainees case and once to disclose important cost information over its crime legislation. That government refused, also defied the will of Parliament and was found in contempt.

Can the member tell us why? What is the difference between the Harper government refusing to disclose documents in contempt of the House and the current government doing so?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, the NDP-Liberal coalition is alive and well, and the NDP is not taking the government to task for its failure to produce corruption documents. I understand why the member is probably not asking about that. It is because he knows that, once the documents come out, the NDP will not be able to prop up the government anymore. His leader will not get his pension, and they will actually have to try to vote non-confidence in the government, which they are catastrophically afraid of doing.

Instead of talking about the task at hand, the member tries to bring up something from 15 years ago to distract. The NDP-Liberal coalition is alive and well in Parliament.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the SDTC scandal, at its heart, is about those who have a path to the very heights of government. There are the insiders and the rest of us, and there are two sets of rules.

Privilege

We know that, during the pandemic, the government gave out money through the Canada emergency response benefit. Many individuals in my riding and, I am sure, in the member's riding were found to be ineligible and had to pay back every single dime to CRA, despite all the challenges they had. The Auditor General found that the same thing happened with SDTC monies, with ineligible companies being allowed to have these monies.

Does the member believe it is common sense that these monies should absolutely be paid back? Does he believe the government has a duty to force those payments to come back?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, the short answer to that is yes. It is another program where there has been catastrophic mismanagement by the NDP-Liberal government.

What I talked about in my speech was that they chose to give non-competitive bidded contracts to one company. Here, 313 million dollars' worth of contracts out of \$342 million went to one company with non-competitive bids. That company decided to have the program administered mostly through Brazil. There are Canadian dollars to support a Canadian program that actually went to a company that hired people in Brazil. We cannot make up this kind of incompetence.

On top of that, \$3.5 billion went to 77,000 recipients who were ineligible. Was there malfeasance in this? That needs to be looked into as well; we know how corrupt the NDP-Liberal government has been.

• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the degree to which we are witnessing the leader of the Conservative Party being borderline in contempt of Parliament is truly amazing. We do not want to provide the information unredacted, as the Conservative Party of Canada has asked, directly over to the RCMP for good reason: The RCMP does not want it. We are listening to the RCMP and the Auditor General of Canada.

However, in borderline contempt, the leader of the Conservative Party refuses to get a security clearance. Today, what did we find out? There is a direct link between the leadership of the Conservative Party and foreign interference. The leader of the Conservative Party still says no, he does not want to get the security clearance.

Can the member clearly indicate to the people of Brampton and all Canadians why the leader of the Conservative Party is the only leader in the House of Commons who continues to thumb his nose at Canadians and not get the security clearance?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, you have ruled on relevance a number of times today. The parliamentary secretary continues to talk about anything but the privilege motion, and I believe he is being disrespectful to the Chair. I would ask you to rule accordingly.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member might be sensitive to the issue. I am being completely relevant. The reason for the debate today is to have information transferred to the procedure and House affairs committee.

I believe the leader of the Conservative Party is in borderline contempt of Parliament by forcing members of the Conservative Party to speak up. In terms of talking about his character, that is what my question was about. There have been hundreds of questions related to this. The member is wrong to try to limit my freedom of speech in the House by not allowing me to talk about an issue that Canadians are concerned about.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As I have indicated before, relevance should be linked to the debate. The beginning of the member's question was relevant, although the end of it was somewhat not relevant. There was some relevance in that question.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, in law school, we learned a maxim: When we have the facts on our side, we argue the facts; when we have the law on our side, we argue the law; and when we have neither the facts nor the law on our side, we raise our voices and bang our desks. That is exactly what we just saw from the NDP-Liberal member.

Let us talk about a couple of things. If the Liberals want to improve national security, they can release the names, which is what we have been calling for, just as they could release the documents. Do we see the pattern? They claim all kinds of privileges while they hide information they claim is not necessary. The Prime Minister has allegedly had access to all this information and has not done a single thing to protect anyone in this country from a single scintilla of foreign interference, but somehow the so-called security briefing, which is mostly a muzzling order, would change things. It would not.

Let us have sunlight. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. Liberals should release the names of the people alleged to be involved in foreign interference and release the documents. Let us have some transparency. Wait a minute, they ran on being an open and transparent government nine years ago.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are hearing more and more about this scandal. We have been talking now for months about how much money has gone and missing and how many ethics charges there are. It is unbelievable. We heard this morning from the Auditor General's report that things are growing more and more. My only concern is that there are so many scandals and issues that people are losing track.

My colleague opposite from Dufferin—Caledon mentioned some whistle-blower testimony. There is one thing he may not have mentioned, which I would like to read and get his comments on. This is directly from the SDTC whistle-blower, who said, "I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation from being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere."

Could the member comment on that and why these documents are not being produced?

• (1340)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, it is nice to have a relevant question and not questions from the government trying to dismiss and distract from this.

This is 100% true. We have to go back to what I said in my speech. This whistle-blower makes great points, so we have to ask ourselves why the Liberals are covering up and hiding these documents. It is because they know how damning they will be, not just for their government but for the ministers involved. It is the only reason.

With the terrible mismanagement of this program, either the minister involved was incompetent and should, therefore, be fired or the minister was involved in the corruption, which is why Liberals are trying to hide it.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the massive scandal at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, more appropriately known as the billion-dollar Liberal green slush fund. This is a scandal involving \$400 million in taxpayer dollars that improperly went out the door, according to the Auditor General. Of that, \$330 million involved conflicts of interest involving board members; that was 186 conflicts of interest and multiple violations of the SDTC act.

In the face of such a scandal, Canadians can rightly ask how it is that board members who were Liberal insiders engaged in conflicts of interest funnelled tens of millions of dollars into companies that they had interests in and got away with it for so long. Very simply, how this happened and why they got away with it for so long is that, after nine years of the current Prime Minister, we have a government in which there is a culture of rot and corruption that goes right to the top, to the Prime Minister.

This is a Prime Minister who fired his Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould, when she defied his unethical and unlawful orders to interfere in the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. This is a Prime Minister who hid behind cabinet confidence to obstruct an RCMP criminal investigation into his potential wrongdoing. This is a Prime Minister who has the distinction of being the first Prime Minister in Canadian history to be found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act, not once but twice.

This reflects what we have seen at SDTC, and it also perhaps explains why, as we speak, there are sitting members of cabinet who, like the Prime Minister, have been found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act, including the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Public Safety. I would also mention the Liberal member for Hull—Aylmer, who was found guilty of breaking the Conflict of Interest Act while he served as parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister.

Then there is the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre, who two weeks ago resigned from cabinet in disgrace. This is someone who got caught violating the Conflict of Interest Act when he was involved in the operations of a shady PPE company in direct violation of the act while he sat in cabinet. More than that, the member for Edmonton Centre's company has been ordered by Alberta courts to pay back clients nearly \$8 million for ripping them off. It faces seven lawsuits alleging fraud, and the Edmonton police have opened a criminal investigation into the member's company.

Privilege

As such, all of this is to say that there is a culture of rot, corruption and conflict from top to bottom in this government, and it has been happening from practically day one, when this Prime Minister took office. Consistent with that rotten culture, it comes as no surprise that former Liberal minister, Navdeep Bains, when he was the industry minister, appointed a conflicted person as the chair of SDTC.

Annette Verschuren was someone who no doubt had a fair amount of business experience, but she had, as I alluded to, a major problem. She had a conflict of interest insofar as her company was receiving \$2.2 million from SDTC. That is a blatant conflict of interest, and it ought to have immediately disqualified her from that role. However, Navdeep Bains, being in the cabinet of a corrupt and conflicted government, said conflicts be damned, and he appointed Annette Verschuren as chair.

• (1345)

It was from that time onward that we saw the self-dealings, the conflicts and the mismanagement that were identified in the Auditor General's report. Almost all of it occurred under the chair at that time, Annette Verschuren, someone who was handpicked by Navdeep Bains.

At or around the time that Verschuren was appointed by Bains to serve as chair, the SDTC board adopted a conflict of interest policy that encouraged corruption. Just to give the House an illustration of what was contained in this policy, it permitted directors to buy and sell securities within companies funded by SDTC within three days of a public announcement. To illustrate this policy in action, a board member could sit in and vote to fund a company for a project that would be announced on Monday and the same director could go and buy and sell securities in that company on Thursday. It is akin to insider trading.

At the public accounts committee, the Liberal member for Beaches—East York took great exception when I characterized it as that. I would remind the member, through you, Madam Speaker, that it is completely at odds with the rules of the Ontario Securities Commission for publicly traded companies, rules relating specifically to insider trading and self-dealing. It is no wonder because, as I said, it is akin to insider trading.

Privilege

Pursuant to the rules of the Ontario Securities Commission, the directors of those publicly traded companies can only buy and sell shares on a limited basis outside of the quarterly financial reporting periods. However, here we have a policy that basically allowed members to get rich with insider information. It is total corruption. If the member for Beaches—East York wants to dispute that it is insider trading, it certainly is corruption.

Not only did the policy give a green light to, essentially, insider trading, but it also violated the standards provided for in the Conflict of Interest Act. Why is that a problem? Among the problems with that is that seven of the 14 board members were appointed by cabinet. They were GIC appointments and were therefore bound by the Conflict of Interest Act, yet we had a policy at SDTC that violated the Conflict of Interest Act and also violated the SDTC act, specifically subsection 12(2), which states, “no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities.” However, that is precisely what happened again and again at SDTC.

The Auditor General found that five out of the 15 board members, a third of the board, had interests in companies that were being funded by SDTC while they sat on the board in blatant conflicts of interest and in blatant violation of the SDTC act. One such example involved the chair herself, Ms. Verschuren. She not only voted but actually moved two motions to funnel \$38.5 million into SDTC companies under the guise of their being so-called COVID relief payments, payments that the Auditor General determined to be improper and outside of the scope of the contribution agreements with the Department of Industry. Therefore, it was \$38.5 million of mismanagement.

• (1350)

This is pretty bad, but even worse, arguably, is that \$220,000 of that went into Ms. Verschuren's own company, NRStor. As I noted, Ms. Verschuren is a woman with vast business experience and vast experience sitting on corporate boards. It should not take someone with that experience, and frankly it is a matter of common sense, to know it is completely unethical and a conflict of interest to sit on a board and move a motion to funnel money into one's own company. Not only is it a conflict of interest, but I would say there is another word for it. It is called stealing. It is stealing taxpayers' money, and Ms. Verschuren was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner for that blatant conflict.

Then there is Andrée-Lise Méthot. She is a close associate of the radical environment minister. Ms. Méthot came to the public accounts committee and admitted that SDTC funnelled \$10.4 million into companies she had interests in. She said that she identified she had a conflict and left the room, but of course that is not good enough. Think about it. It is not good enough in that context for a board member to say, “I have a conflict; therefore, I am going to leave the room,” and the board votes to funnel \$10.4 million into their companies. Then the board member comes back and another board member leaves the room and the board votes to funnel money into that member's companies. That occurred again and again, 186 times. Wink, wink, nudge, nudge. It speaks to a culture of total corruption.

Yes, Ms. Méthot can argue that she technically recused herself, but come on. It is further not good enough because it violates the SDTC act in terms of not profiting, not gaining and not acquiring property. That is strictly prohibited, but there was Méthot cashing in \$10.4 million in unlawful payments approved by the board. When I put it to her at committee that she had blatantly violated the SDTC act, she had no answer. It was almost as if she was taken aback, which speaks to the degree to which there was a culture of conflict and entitlement that permeated the SDTC board for so many years under former Liberal minister Bains' watch and the current minister's watch.

The ministers say they did not really know anything about it and that SDTC is an arm's length foundation. That is hardly an excuse. We are talking about a billion taxpayer dollars, and we have a former minister and a current minister who are basically trying to wash their hands clean and saying to forget about the \$400 million, forget about the \$330 million involving the conflicts of board members and forget the 186 conflicts of interest. They say that it was not their responsibility.

The Auditor General's report is an indictment of the lack of oversight provided under the two ministers, Bains and the current minister. It is an absolute indictment, the report, but it is worse than that. There was someone who, according to the deputy minister, was the department's eyes and ears at every one of these green slush fund board meetings, the assistant deputy minister Andrew Noseworthy. He sat there as there were 186 conflicts of interest and as tens of millions of dollars were funnelled into the companies of board members, and he appeared before the public accounts committee last Thursday.

• (1355)

His excuse was that he had no independent way of verifying conflicts of interest. There were 186 conflicts of interest sitting there, but he had no way to determine that there were conflicts of interest. I said to him that this was impossible, that it could not be true because there was plenty of evidence before committee that the practice at SDTC was for an agenda to be sent out weeks before the meeting. Board members were then invited to identify proposed projects in which they had conflicts of interest. At the beginning of each meeting, the secretary would then read the the names of those members who identified conflicts of interest, while Noseworthy was sitting there. Noseworthy, after he was caught misleading the committee, came up with the response that it was not his fiduciary duty to report on these conflicts and corruption.

It speaks not only to a culture of rot, conflict and corruption that goes right to the top of SDTC's leadership with Ms. Verschuren, with members of the cabinet and the Prime Minister, but it also speaks to a complete level of contempt for taxpayer money by the government.

I am just flabbergasted by that testimony, but perhaps I should not be flabbergasted, because, again, it goes back to the culture of corruption that is so embedded in the government.

Here we are, more than two months after the House ordered the government to turn over all documents relating to SDTC so that they in turn could be turned over by the law clerk to the RCMP and we still do not have the documents. It begs the question, why? The only plausible explanation is that what is contained in those documents is really bad.

Based upon the Auditor General's report, we know that there was a total lack of oversight at SDTC. We know that in some instances the ministers of the government encouraged or tolerated conflicts of interest, such as Bains handpicking Verschuren to serve as chair, notwithstanding that she had a conflict of interest. We know that these ministers had to have known that all was not well at SDTC, given the fact that they had eyes and ears sitting in on each of these meetings. We also know from the whistle-blower that despite the minister's assertion that he took action when he learned of wrongdoing, that was not so, that the minister was more interested in protecting himself and the insiders who got rich, and was prepared to take steps to cover up this massive scandal for as long as possible.

The government's refusal to turn over the documents, to black out thousands and thousands of pages is a continuation of the cover-up. The bottom line is that heads need to roll. There needs to be accountability and we need to get fully to the bottom of this massive scandal. If there is criminal wrongdoing, then the RCMP needs that evidence and taxpayers need to be made whole from the Liberal insiders. As long as the government continues to block and obstruct the House order, we will continue to stand up for taxpayers and demand the release of the documents.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

CHINESE CANADIANS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker for over 150 years, Chinese Canadians have made remarkable contributions to building Canada. From working in mines and railways in the past to driving Canada's leadership in the knowledge-based economy and advanced technologies, Chinese Canadians have been and continue to be a vital force in Canada's socio-economic development.

With a rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years, the Chinese people have profoundly contributed to humanity through advancements in science, medicine and countless other fields essential to human progress. It is our collective responsibility to preserve and promote this invaluable culture and heritage, ensuring that all Canadians today and in the future can learn from and celebrate its significance.

Statements by Members

I call on Canada to designate February each year as national Chinese heritage month.

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RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a child becomes sick, it takes a terrible toll on the entire family. This burden becomes so much greater by the fact that hospitals with pediatric services are often located a significant distance from the family's home.

This is where Ronald McDonald House Charities steps in to provide accommodations, meals, peer support and other services to the entire family while their child is being treated in a nearby hospital.

Unfortunately, my home city of Regina is one of the major centres in Canada that until now does not have a Ronald McDonald House despite the growing need. Fortunately, RMHC recently launched its Miles to Go campaign to build a new facility in Regina within walking distance from the Regina General Hospital.

I applaud Ronald McDonald House Charities for investing in the Regina General Hospital neighbourhood, and I encourage everyone to support this worthwhile cause.

* * *

CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Christmas is fast approaching and thanks to the Oakville Professional Firefighters Association toy drive, children and youth in need in our community will have a gift under the tree. Last year, firefighters distributed gifts for 5,137 local kids, bringing smiles and joy.

Gifts can be dropped off at any Oakville fire hall or at the drive-thru toy drive at Coronation Park on December 13, from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m.

The toy drive has been led by Kurt Merriman for over a decade. Kurt grew the toy drive significantly, putting in thousands of volunteer hours to bring Christmas joy to so many. He partnered with local organizations, including the Toronto Rock, to be able to provide more and more kids with gifts each year.

Kurt has left Oakville for a new position in the fire service, and on behalf of all members in the House, I would like to thank him for his elf work in Oakville with the toy drive.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CORPORATION DE DÉVELOPPEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE DE LA HAUTE-YAMASKA**

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the Corporation de développement communautaire, or CDC, de la Haute-Yamaska. Recently, 160 people gathered to celebrate the event. We must acknowledge the invaluable contributions that are made every day by the member organizations of the CDC de la Haute-Yamaska.

Certificates of recognition were presented to the various member organizations as a thank you for their commitment to the community over the years. To mark the anniversary, singer-songwriter Christian Morisset wrote a theme song and produced a music video to go with it.

We can be proud of this community movement and the impact it has had by defending the rights of seniors, women, people living with disabilities and the homeless, to name but a few examples. Over the past 30 years, the CDC has been the voice of the community, creating and maintaining collaborative ties and unity among all the organizations. I wish Nicolas, the entire team and the board of directors a happy 30th anniversary. Long live the Corporation de développement communautaire de la Haute-Yamaska.

* * *

• (1405)

SHOP LOCAL

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the time of year when we are all getting ready to celebrate Christmas and New Year's. We are planning our holiday meals with family and buying gifts for children, relatives and friends. Big box retailers are having sales on a wide range of items, but we must not forget the small businesses, artisans and makers in our communities.

Shopping local means investing in our economy to help create jobs. It also means supporting small businesses, independent retailers and makers in the regions, especially mine. It is also a way to reduce our environmental footprint, because the fewer kilometres there are between us and our products, the less shipping is required, which means fewer greenhouse gas emissions. This Christmas, let us shop local and support local businesses.

* * *

*[English]***ANTI-SEMITISM**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, as part of an anti-Israel mob in Montreal, a woman named Mai Abdulhadi was recorded giving Nazi salutes and stating that the "final solution" was coming. It turns out that this woman was a franchise owner of two Second Cup cafes at Montreal's Jewish hospital.

Peter Mammias, the CEO of the company that owns the Second Cup coffee chain, swiftly issued a statement unequivocally condemning the deplorable actions of this woman and immediately ter-

minated her relationship with his company. I would like to commend Mr. Mammias for demonstrating moral clarity when it was required. By acting swiftly and decisively, he showed that he would give no quarter to anti-Semites.

Compare that to the actions of the Liberal government, which has tried to appease those who stoke division and hate in Canada. That it took the Prime Minister almost a day to issue any sort of statement with regard to the recent anti-Semitic Montreal riots is a disgrace.

I thank Peter Mammias for demonstrating the strong, decisive moral clarity needed to maintain Canada's peaceful pluralism. The Prime Minister could learn a thing or two from him.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, December 2 marks the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. Most of us think about the Atlantic slave trade insofar as we think about slavery at all. World Vision estimates that there are multiple more people enslaved now than there were then. Twenty-first century supply chains have brought this scourge to our shores.

This Parliament passed Bill S-211, and the first reporting date was in May of this year. What the reports show is that the supply chains are deeply infected. Of the 6,000 entities reporting, 38% identified disturbing issues. Multiple more did not report at all.

I take some encouragement from the government's willingness to be proactive, but the data needs to be analyzed, needs at least one more reporting cycle, and more entities need to be willing or unwillingly brought into the regime.

Slavery may be as old as humanity, but it does not mean that we need to support it by purchasing its products.

* * *

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World AIDS Day, a day to remember the 42 million people who have died from AIDS, to remember our relatives and our friends.

I remember in 1982 as a medical student seeing a poster about a mysterious outbreak of a deadly pneumonia in the gay community of San Francisco. Four years later, we were seeing a lot of cases of AIDS in Toronto. In the late 1980s, when I was working in Swaziland in southern Africa, it went from zero cases of HIV to 26% of pregnant women being HIV positive within a few short years.

AIDS was and is a pandemic. For a long time, HIV/AIDS was absolutely a death sentence. The discovery of antiretrovirals has turned AIDS into a manageable chronic condition.

Although our work is not yet done, making ARVs available to millions of people globally has absolutely been one of the greatest triumphs of the modern era.

* * *

• (1410)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has completely lost control of Canada's borders. Today, there are over 260,000 unprocessed refugee claims, a staggering 2500% increase since 2015, when there was just one shy of 10,000.

Government documents also show that up to three million temporary resident visas will expire by the end of next year, yet the immigration minister's only solution is to hope people leave voluntarily. At committee, he deflected, offering vague responses about monitoring and partnerships. Canadians deserve better than a minister who cannot explain how his department enforces immigration rules.

After nine years of chaos, it is clear that the NDP-Liberal coalition has no plan to fix the immigration system it has broken. Even migrant activists have stated that voluntary compliance is not happening. Only a Conservative government will fix our broken borders and ensure that it works for Canadians first.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to take decisive and aggressive action to address crime across Canada, having created offences to target organized crime gangs that exploit young people. We have also invested over \$600 million into fighting guns and gangs and have passed gun control laws to take violent weapons out of our communities. These efforts and many more have been implemented to tackle crime and invest in public safety.

I would like to recognize the dedicated work of 31 Division in Humber River—Black Creek, especially Superintendent Mandeep Mann, Inspector Jack Gurr and officer Melody Carroll. Their tireless efforts, often under challenging circumstances, ensure the safety, well-being and growth of our community.

However, safety is not just about law enforcement. It requires the active participation of all of us in Humber River—Black Creek, including countless community groups and grassroots organizations that play an invaluable role in this effort. By working together, police, local organizations and residents, we can build safer, stronger communities for all.

* * *

CANADIAN ENERGY SECTOR

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP-Liberals are politicizing environmental protection. Instead of focusing on real, tangible results, they are pushing another ideological campaign that will further impoverish Canadians.

Statements by Members

At a time when two million Canadians are going to the food bank every single month, the Liberals are planning to quadruple the carbon tax. Their so-called green energy regulations will further punish the residents of Ontario by adding \$35 billion to the electricity generation cost by 2030. Their clean-energy plan cannot even be achieved without compromising our grid. Ontario is pleading with the Liberal government to reverse course on the draconian, ideological energy mandates.

Only Conservatives will protect Canadians from energy poverty and restore energy prosperity to Canada.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Feed Ontario released its annual hunger report. Over one million Ontarians had to access the food bank in the last year. That is more than double the number from the last four years.

Every day, more Canadians struggle to afford food because of the actions of the Prime Minister. Higher prices are the official policy of the Liberal Party. The Liberals plan to quadruple the carbon tax by 2030 to 61¢ a litre on gas. They want to ban 95% of plastic food packaging.

When Liberals tax the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food, then ban the packaging of food, higher prices are the only result. Canadians need to know that this is the Liberal policy. If people cannot afford to go to the grocery store, they emit less carbon. If people cannot afford the price of beef, they emit less carbon.

Canadians cannot afford the Prime Minister. That is why we need a carbon tax election now.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a puzzle in our politics.

For years, the Conservative leader and his party have lectured Canadians about the virtues of tax cuts, yet when given the chance to support a GST tax break that puts money in the pockets of working families, what do the Conservatives do? They vote against it.

Statements by Members

The Conservative leader carefully crafts an image of caring for Canadians, but when given the chance to support them with tangible relief, he turns his back on them, voting against dental care for seniors and voting against the school food program for kids.

With each vote, we see the puzzle taking shape: a Conservative leader so fixated on politics that he has forgotten the people.

“Canada first” works only when one puts actual Canadians first.

* * *

• (1415)

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked World AIDS Day. Each year, we remember the people who have been lost and we celebrate the strength and resiliency of people living with HIV/AIDS, the people who have supported and cared for them over the past 40 years, and the doctors and researchers who have made significant advances in treatment possible so that ending HIV is now in sight.

Canada has adopted the goal set by UNAIDS of eliminating new HIV cases by 2030, but we are falling far short on the actions necessary to make this a reality. Instead, new cases in this country are skyrocketing; they are up 35% overall in the past year and up 88% in Edmonton.

This year's UNAIDS report tells us what we must do. We must work to destigmatize HIV by decriminalizing non-disclosure. We must also make access to testing and treatment universal and accessible for people at risk by increasing funding to community-based, frontline service organizations that can reach people where they are. Two of those proposals are on the Minister of Health's desk right now. There is still time to meet the 2030 goal if the government listens to HIV organizations across the country and acts now.

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[*Translation*]

HUGUETTE PLOUFFE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I want to sing the praises of a remarkable woman, Huguette Plouffe.

Huguette has poured her heart and soul into defending the rights of seniors in the riding of Repentigny for the past 15 years. As president of the L'Assomption chapter of the Association québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées, or AQ-DR, since 2016, Huguette has fought tirelessly against senior abuse and worked to improve seniors' quality of life and social inclusion.

Her dedication has won her many accolades. In 2019, Huguette was named mediation ambassador, and in 2021, she received the Michel-Haguette award. This year, she earned a triple win, receiving the Prix Hommage Aînés for the Lanaudière region and a medal from the National Assembly of Quebec, followed by her induction as a knight of the Ordre de Repentigny.

Today, my turn has come to celebrate her achievements in the House. Ms. Plouffe is an inspiration to us all and a true force of nature. I thank her for her drive, her generosity, and her unwavering commitment to strengthening the social fabric of our community.

[*English*]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are struggling. Taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and the government's time is up.

Even the NDP leader admits that the Liberal government is greedy and anti-worker. He is right. The Liberals have proven themselves too weak and too selfish to fight for everyday Canadians, but the NDP has propped up the government at every turn, choosing political survival over the well-being of Canada. Canadians are tired of the NDP's saying one thing and doing another. Now its leader faces a crucial decision: Will he stand by his own words or continue to prop up this corrupt Liberal government?

Soon we will present a motion of non-confidence made entirely from the NDP leader's own statements and say that the House proclaims it has lost confidence in the Prime Minister and the government. The question this: Will he vote “yes” or will he vote “no”? The choice is his. Canadians are watching.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Conservative leader has a talent for saying one thing and doing another. Conservatives love to wrap themselves in the flag of tax cuts, but last week they voted against our tax break. That is right; the Conservative leader said no to putting more money back in the pockets of Canadians. Canadians are wondering whether Conservatives believe in affordability or whether it is just a sound bite for their YouTube channel.

The government believes in action, not slogans. While Conservatives oppose solutions, we will keep delivering for Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we have even more proof that the Prime Minister has lost control over spending. The Auditor General has confirmed that this Liberal government gave \$3.5 billion in CEBA loans to companies that did not qualify. Fully 10%, or 77,000, of those businesses were not eligible. The whole thing was handled by the Accenture consulting firm, which cost \$200 million more.

Is that not proof that this Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question comes from the Leader of the Opposition, who called our life-saving supports for small businesses “big, fat government [supports]” and said that the Conservatives do not believe in this kind of support.

When times are tough, small businesses will not be supported by the Conservative Party of Canada. On this side of the House, we were there to support close to 900,000 small businesses to keep them from bankruptcy and economic uncertainty. We will continue to be there for them.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know now that I was right. Rather than helping businesses in need that qualified for the money, the government wasted \$3.5 billion. What is more, it grew the bureaucracy by 40% to administer programs. To top it all off, the government spent \$200 million to hire the Accenture consulting firm, which provided most of its work from Brazil.

Why is it always consultants, bureaucrats and the corrupt who get money from this government?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about businesses. What have we done for businesses in the past seven or eight days? We have increased the pollution rebate to give businesses that rebate. Just last week, we paused the GST to give all businesses representing all restaurants across Canada a GST holiday.

What did the Leader of the Opposition do? He decided to vote against it. He and his entire caucus voted against efforts to help businesses. That is the Conservative Party of Canada, all right.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is more proof today that the weak Prime Minister has lost control of spending.

The Auditor General reports that the Prime Minister's government gave out \$3.5 billion of so-called CEBA loans to companies that did not qualify, a total of 77,000 of them. That is 10% of all recipients. On top of that, the Liberal government then gave a mas-

Oral Questions

sive implementation contract to high-priced consultants at Accenture, which cost \$200 million and farmed out a lot of the work to Brazil.

Is it not more proof that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the question ironic, because the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon actually sent me a letter advocating for CEBA loans to support a small business in his own riding.

The member understands the value of the CEBA loans, because they were a lifeline for small businesses during an unprecedented time. We are going to continue to help support businesses, keep their doors open, keep their lights on and keep their employees working.

I find it unfortunate, because the letter is yet another example of a letter that the Leader of the Opposition did not know about.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our members champion their constituents who are eligible for assistance, not 77,000 companies that should not have received the \$3.5 billion in misspent dollars, all while Canadians are starving.

Today, the hunger report is out from Feed Ontario, and there have been one million Ontarians who lined up seven million times at the food bank after the Prime Minister brought in a carbon tax on the truckers and farmers who bring us our food.

When will the Liberals axe the tax?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we thank Feed Ontario and the food banks across this country that do amazing work. Let me quote from the report that was just mentioned: “In June 2022, those over the age of 75 received a permanent 10 per cent increase in Old Age Security ... alongside the regular inflationary increases... After that change, the percentage of food bank visitors who were seniors began to decrease.” With this, in addition to the measures we put forward for families, we will continue to deliver for Canadians while the Conservatives oppose at every opportunity.

Oral Questions

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last five years, food prices in Canada have increased 37% faster than in the United States. That gap opened after the introduction of the carbon tax, which this government now, with the NDP's help, wants to quadruple. The consequence is that in the last four years, food bank use in Ontario is up 86%, and one in four children go to school hungry, according to this government's own data.

Why will the government not axe this crazy plan to quadruple the carbon tax? In fact, why not axe the tax altogether?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is yet another example of the Conservative leader talking about one thing and doing another.

When it comes to supporting children, we have been negotiating school food agreements that are helping 200,000 children across this country, yet the Conservative leader is opposed to that. He talks about lowering taxes, but last week he made every single one of his MPs vote against a GST tax cut for Canadians. He also talks about wanting to hold an opposition day, but we gave him an opportunity today and he ran away from it. That is what weakness looks like when it comes to leadership.

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[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report proves that the Liberals really do not care about seniors. Consider this. The federal government has no idea whether its programs, like old age security, are actually meeting people's needs. The Liberals do not know whether the indexing formula for OAS corresponds to the actual inflation rate. They do not have any data on whether more needs to be done for seniors. If they do get any data, like the data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, that prove that their national housing strategy is failing seniors, they just shelve it.

How do they justify having the temerity to lecture seniors? How do they justify telling seniors that they are too rich to deserve more help?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend across the aisle would have more credibility if he had not systematically voted against all the supports we thought were needed during and after the pandemic to help our seniors. Consider, for example, the GIS increase and the housing programs that will build more homes for seniors in Quebec and across the country.

We will take no lessons from the Bloc Québécois when it comes to seniors.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I have to choose between the minister and the Auditor General, I am going to believe the Auditor General every time.

The Auditor General has shown that the federal government does not know whether its programs really meet seniors' needs. The Liberals do know because they have no evidence. They do not know

this, but they claim to know that seniors aged 65 to 74 are too wealthy to deserve a 10% pension increase. That much they know. They also know that retirees are far too wealthy to deserve a \$250 cheque, even though it is being offered to people earning up to \$150,000 a year. That much they know.

Do they also know that seniors are disgusted about being treated with such contempt?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to helping seniors, despite the push back from the other side of the House, from the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois, who consistently vote against helping our seniors, time and time again. Consider the Canadian dental care plan. The Bloc Québécois has systematically voted against hundreds of thousands of Quebecers who benefit from it.

The Bloc Québécois voted against all that. It is mind-boggling.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are worried about what will happen to their jobs and whether they will be able to afford groceries or rent. Donald Trump's outrageous tariffs would put jobs at risk and increase the price of everything we buy. Last week, the Prime Minister managed to meet with him, but apart from a nice little photo op, he returned empty-handed.

Did he at least make it clear to the U.S. president-elect that attacking Quebec and Canadian workers would not fly back home?

• (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. Imposing the tariffs that the Americans are considering will harm Canadian workers and the Canadian economy, but also the American economy and American workers. That is why we spoke with President Trump and his future secretaries about the importance of working together and recognizing the integration between our two economies. Obviously, we discussed border security.

It was a positive conversation, and I have full confidence that we will be able to work well with President Trump.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried about their jobs and whether they can afford to put food on the table. Donald Trump's unfair tariffs will threaten those jobs and jack up prices for Canadians. Last week, the Prime Minister met with him, but he has nothing to show for it and he came back empty-handed.

Canadian workers want to know: did the Prime Minister make it clear to Donald Trump that balancing the U.S. budget on the backs of Canadian workers will not work for Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to disagree with my friend for Edmonton—Griesbach, but the idea that we came back empty-handed is completely false. He knows very well that we had a productive discussion with Mr. Trump and his future cabinet secretaries. The Prime Minister, of course, spoke about the importance of protecting the Canadian economy and Canadian workers from tariffs. We also discussed with our American friends the negative impact those tariffs could have on their economy and affordability in the United States as well. I think the commitment from President-elect Trump to continue to work with us was far from empty-handed.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a few short years, the Prime Minister has lost control of the deficit, of immigration and of our border. He gave us a 2,500% increase in the number of unprocessed refugee claims and he still thinks three million temporary residents are going to leave this country voluntarily. Canada is staring down the barrel at 25% tariffs thanks to his open border policies, his free drugs for everyone plan and his economic vandalism. The Prime Minister can mitigate that all today.

Where is the Canada first plan to keep our border safe?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these people are just not serious. She supports the leader of the opposition who sat idly by in government while it cut money to border enforcement at the Canada-U.S. border and at the immigration-refugee border. For those of them who are saying this is ancient history, we proposed an asylum reform package in May. What did the Conservatives and the clapping seals in the back do at the finance committee? They voted against it and voted it down. They can support us in our asylum reform if they so choose. I encourage them to do so.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they have been in government for nine years. They have known for years that immigration was out of control. They knew for years that asylum claims were out of control. They knew for years that our border was broken. None of what President-elect Trump has been campaigning on was a secret. The Prime Minister even threw that minister under the bus for his incompetence in immigration. If we are going to save Canadian jobs, we needed a plan yesterday to fix the disorder at the border.

I will ask again. Where is the Canada first plan to keep our border safe?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is from the gleeful authors of the barbaric practices snitch line. That was their approach to immigration when they last had a chance. We have been very serious with President-elect Trump about our intention to secure the border. It is something we clearly intend to do. They have an opportunity to do a number of things and that is to support any asylum reform we put in front of the House. I encourage them to break their silliness in the House and to do so.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government has broken our bor-

ders. It brought in three million temporary residents who need to leave Canada in the next year, but it has no way to know if they will actually leave. Will they go back home? Will they stay here illegally? Will they cross over the U.S. border? By the way, the President-elect has made it very clear that there are no more free rides for our broken borders. The bottom line is these Liberals do not know.

We need a Canada first plan to fix our broken borders. Where is it?

• (1435)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things in our plan was to reverse some of the draconian cuts that the previous Conservative government made to the brave women and men who work in our Canadian border services. We take the issue of border integrity and border security seriously, as do the Americans.

Our discussion on Friday evening with our American friends was very much about the joint work that we could continue to do together. That work has been done for decades between Canadian and American law enforcement. It has kept both countries safe and secure, and we are prepared to continue to do more as well.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister went to Mar-a-Lago to kiss the ring and returned with absolutely nothing, all while there are serious gaps in our immigration system. For example, there are over 260,000 unprocessed refugee claims right now in the system. The Liberals are paying out billions of dollars every year for hotels, food and medical costs for these claimants. They are even allowed to work while they wait nearly four years to be processed.

Why would people leave Canada voluntarily when they can hitch themselves to the NDP-Liberal gravy train? Where is the Canada first plan to keep our borders secure?

The Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. minister, I just want to encourage all members on all sides of the House to please, out of respect for those who do depend on simultaneous translation, allow them to hear the questions and the answers given by not taking the floor when they are not recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition was in his basement figuring out what rhyme to put up on Twitter to express his displeasure with the government, the Prime Minister of Canada was meeting with Donald Trump, our most important partner. That is responsible.

At the same time, when the Leader of the Opposition is not doing that in his basement, he is skipping around the greater Toronto area promising everyone and anyone visas to this country, and promising not to deport them. That is not responsible. That is not serious. We plan to be serious.

The Speaker: Again, I am going to ask all members to not take the floor unless they are recognized by the Speaker. I will refer specifically to the member for New Brunswick Southwest, if he could please not do so.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for nine years, we have been asking this Prime Minister to wake up and regain control of our border, but he continues to do the opposite. For example, in 2015, the number of unprocessed asylum claims was under 10,000. Today, there are over 260,000 unprocessed claims.

We called for more policing of our border and greater collaboration with provincial police forces to crack down on human trafficking, illegal entry, drug production and trafficking and so on.

We have proposed a plan. Will the government agree to it and implement it?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we had a very cordial and constructive conversation with our American partners on Friday evening. We talked about security at the Canada-U.S. border over the decades and the integration of Canadian police forces with their American partners. We talked, for example, about the important work that the RCMP is doing in the fight against fentanyl, which has led to drug seizures and significant arrests, often in partnership with our American allies.

We will continue to do this work for the safety of Canadians.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, President-elect Trump just asked the Prime Minister to do something. We have been asking for the same thing over here for nine years. We are calling for additional measures to stop gun smuggling, drug trafficking and auto theft. He never listened. Gun smuggling and auto theft are a scourge in Quebec. We have suggested enhanced surveillance at the Port of Montreal and at the border, but nothing has changed.

We have a plan. Will the Prime Minister agree to implement it?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way has a list of things that our govern-

ment has actually done. We have worked with our law enforcement. We have invested more to reverse the cuts made by the former Conservative government.

If my colleague is serious about our country's national security, I suggest that he encourage his boss to obtain the security clearance needed to access information that will help protect his political party and caucus. For example, when it comes to India's foreign interference, it might be a good idea for the Leader of the Opposition to do that.

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● (1440)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after ArriveCAN, the auditor has uncovered a new contracting scandal: Accenture.

Ottawa gave \$313 million to this multinational to manage the CEBA loans for it during the pandemic. That is five times the cost of ArriveCAN, and, as with ArriveCAN, the money was paid untendered, without a spending limit and without any auditing. The Auditor General talked about how all the departments involved allowed for an “accountability void”.

Are the Liberals allergic to accountability?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we love accountability and that is why we thank the Auditor General for all of her work. She did a solid job, and it is important to acknowledge that this morning. It is also important to acknowledge that when the pandemic hit, the only thing the Conservatives wanted to do, according to the Leader of the Opposition, was cut corporate taxes in the hope that corporations would suddenly start hiring the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who had lost their jobs.

We brought in measures that saved hundreds of thousands of SMEs in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada from going bankrupt.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only does nobody know how Accenture spent our \$313 million, but the Liberals are still refusing to find out.

The Department of Finance did not accept the Auditor General's recommendation to look into the accountability gaps. It has washed its hands of the situation. After giving out \$300 million without a call for tenders and without any follow-up, the very least the government could do in order to be accountable is to accept the Auditor General's recommendations.

Is the Department of Finance refusing to look into this situation because it is afraid that Quebecers will find out that they have been burned again?

Oral Questions

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): The Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, helped countless SMEs in Quebec and across Canada avoid bankruptcy.

It is thanks to CEBA that workers were able to get their paycheques. I am not surprised that the Bloc Québécois is rising in the House four years later. Perhaps they want to change the channel because, last week, they voted against a tax holiday. I am not making this up. The Bloc Québécois decided to vote against measures that would make life easier for Canadians, especially during the holiday season.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us focus a bit. The president of Export Development Canada told the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that she had awarded \$149 million in contracts to Accenture. Today, the Auditor General revealed that it was actually \$313 million. That is more than double. How did we go from \$149 million to \$313 million?

We will never know, because the finance department refuses to investigate. We have seen this before. Quebeckers pay their taxes, trusting that their money will be invested wisely. How could they possibly not come to the conclusion that the Liberals are abusing that trust?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the Bloc Québécois's position hypocritical. Their request to extend the Canada emergency business account would have generated higher costs. Small businesses asked for help to keep their doors open and their employees working, and that is what we did. Small businesses know we will always be there for them.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for eight consecutive years, food bank usage has risen in Ontario, which is a timeline that matches the corruption and incompetence of the NDP-Liberal government. It has caused the cost of living crisis, a crisis where even 25% of Ontarians who have jobs need to use the food bank.

Canadians deserve relief from this cost of living crisis, so will the Prime Minister cancel his plans to quadruple the carbon tax and call a carbon tax election now?

• (1445)

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great news. Last week I was in P.E.I., where we announced that it was another province that has signed on to the national school food program.

That is 184,000 kids this school year who will receive food at school and almost 1.5 million more meals at school, for a program that the Leader of the Opposition contends does not exist. I challenge him to ask those 184,000 children who are getting food at school. They will school him.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberals have caused this cost of living crisis.

More than one million Ontarians had to use a food bank last year. The NDP-Liberals still cannot do basic math. They still do not understand that, if they tax the farmer who grows the food and tax the trucker who ships the food, they are taxing the families who then buy the food.

The Prime Minister has completely lost touch with reality. Will he take a walk in the snow and call a carbon tax election now?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative members of Parliament are so ridiculous. They had an opportunity today to put forward a vote of confidence in the government, and they decided not to. Yet again, we are seeing Conservative MPs talking out of one side of their mouth, but when it comes time to act, they just cannot deliver.

We are here to work for Canadians. We are doing real things that are delivering for real Canadians, such as school food programs, the Canada child benefit and dental care, which are helping Canadians make ends meet while all Conservatives do is puff hot air.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals try to distract Canadians with tax tricks on Christmas treats and alcohol, more than one million Ontarians turn to the food bank to feed themselves. Food bank use has risen in eight of the nine years the NDP-Liberal government has been in power. In the last two years alone, food bank usage in Ontario has risen by 73%. What is worse is that almost 25% of those food bank users had jobs, providing more evidence that the Prime Minister's cost of living crisis is deepening.

Canadians have had enough. Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and call a carbon tax election?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, giving a tax break to Canadians is real. When parents pay for their kids' Christmas presents at the cash register, they are not going to pay GST. People at the cash register at the grocery store are not going to pay GST on everyday items. When they go to restaurants, they will not pay it either. This is real money back in the pockets of Canadians.

The Conservatives talk about vulnerable Canadians having a rough time but vote against support for Canadians on every single occasion. They stand up in the House to oppose a tax break. They are opposing a tax cut. The Conservative Party of Canada has lost all sense.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that one in five emergency rooms in Ontario had unplanned shutdowns this year. The Prime Minister's praise of Doug Ford's innovation in health care resulted in 2024 being the worst year for emergency room closures in Ontario. The Liberals have given Ford billions of dollars in no-strings-attached health care funds, only for more closures and more uncertainty. Ontarians deserve better.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for funding Doug Ford's privatization scheme, or will he continue to leave Ontarians waiting?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those agreements, which were \$200 billion over 10 years, absolutely did come with common indicators and shared priorities. In fact, we just saw CIHI's report showing in data, for the first time in Canadian history, where we are. That data shows us that nearly every jurisdiction across the country has more doctors and nurses, that surgical wait times are back to where they were before the pandemic and that we are making really important progress.

It is essential that provinces step up and do their part, but we are making really important progress in our health system.

* * *

● (1450)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, border officers want to do their part in protecting Canada, but they need more tools to help stop the flow of toxic drugs, stolen cars and guns. The Conservative leader fired over 1,100 border officers when he was in cabinet, including sniffer dog handlers and front-line staff, and the Liberals never rehired them. New Democrats have been calling on the government for years to invest more in CBSA frontline workers.

Will the Liberals stop letting people down, rehire the officers the Conservatives fired and give them the tools they need to do their job?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague from Windsor West's support for the extraordinary women and men who work for the Canada Border Services Agency. Like him, I had an opportunity to meet many of these women and men who serve in protecting the security of our country and do very important work.

I was glad the member highlighted the draconian cuts that the previous Conservative government made to the Canada Border Services Agency. I am happy to tell him that we have reversed those cuts and have hired considerably more border services officers. The good news is that we are going to continue to do more as well.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader has built his reputation on bashing taxes, yet

when the government puts forward a tax break that would benefit all Canadians, he says no.

Would the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development explain why this GST tax break is so important for Canadians and why the Conservative leader and his party would vote against a tax break that helps everyday people?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this tax break is exactly the kind of relief that Canadians need right now. The Conservative leader contends to be a champion of taxpayers, but when given the opportunity to axe a tax, he will not do it. Conservative MPs are turning their backs on Canadians. While they may prefer slogans to solutions, on this side we will continue to deliver for Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, Canadians are worse off. The U.S. GDP is up 2.8%, while the Canadian GDP is only up 1%. The Canadian GDP per capita is down 0.4%. This is the sixth consecutive quarter in which the Canadian GDP has been down. The Prime Minister does not have a plan, so will he step aside for a prime minister who does?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is misreading the numbers. Statistics Canada just revealed that it needed to revise the GDP numbers upward for the last three years. Canada is expected to have the highest GDP growth in all of the G7 next year.

I think the Conservatives are trying to change the channel. Just a few days ago, they opposed a tax break. They opposed cutting the GST from everyday goods for Canadians, and they do not know how to explain it.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, Canada faces yet another threat to its economy. The U.S. has threatened a 25% tariff on all goods exported from Canada. The greedy government has increased taxes with the carbon tax, the housing tax and capital gains tax. This is not just bad vibes. Will the Prime Minister admit that it is not bad vibes, but bad policies, that force Canadians to suffer?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Prime Minister led a Canadian delegation to Florida to meet with President-elect Trump. They had a productive discussion on border and economic security, including the impacts the tariffs would have on both Canadian and American consumers.

In 2018, it was this government that renegotiated NAFTA, which led to a record trade of \$1.3 trillion just last year. As we have done through three American administrations, we will continue to stand up for Canadian workers and Canadian businesses.

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned of yet another sawmill that is about to close. It is Rapides-des-Joachims' turn, in Pontiac, to pay the price for the Liberal government's weakness. Ten per cent of the population of the village has just found out that they are about to lose their jobs. The economic impact will be devastating. The community could easily become a ghost town, like Sacré-Coeur after the caribou order.

The Prime Minister always finds a way to abandon the forestry sector. When will there be an election?

• (1455)

[English]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber industry is very important to our government. We know it represents thousands of jobs, from British Columbia to Quebec and down to eastern Canada.

We will always stand up for Canadian softwood lumber. We stood up for Canada when the U.S. imposed aluminum and steel tariffs on us. What did the Conservatives do? They asked us to capitulate and back down. We have a proven track record to negotiate good trade deals. We will always stand up for lumber workers.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 23 workers are being laid off, but how many more indirect jobs are also on the chopping block in a village of 188 residents? The prospect of the village becoming a ghost town is real, all because of the Liberal government's failure to secure a softwood lumber agreement. This is the fourth Quebec sawmill in just a few months to announce its closure.

Our workers need a strong leader. When will an election be called to elect the Conservative leader as our prime minister?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely disappointed that the U.S. Department of Commerce has significantly increased its unfair and unjustified duties on softwood lumber from Canada. These unfair and unfounded U.S. duties on softwood lumber unjustifiably harm consumers and producers on both

Oral Questions

sides of the border. Canadian workers are being punished by unfair duties, and American companies that rely on Canadian softwood lumber will bear the burden of these duties.

It is in the best interests of both Canada and the United States to find a lasting solution.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, I introduced a bill on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, and, if it passes, it will really help fight organized crime.

Not only does our bill establish a list of criminal organizations, but it also hits them where it hurts by making their members prove that their assets are not proceeds of crime. It reverses the burden of proof. It sends a clear message to criminals.

Will the government put our bill on the agenda and start getting serious about fighting organized crime?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it addresses a very serious situation.

Organized crime has gone up here in Canada. What we are aiming for and targeting with our policies is a way to deal with the situation. We made changes in budget 2024 and last year's economic statement to target finances associated with organized crime.

We have also made an effort to address auto theft directly. After we invested in our borders and in fighting organized crime, the beautiful province of Quebec saw a 41% drop in vehicle theft.

Those are the Liberals' results.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the gang wars are in our streets. Gangs are taking hits out on journalists, killing innocent people by burning down businesses and shooting at each other in broad daylight. They are even killing each other in the federal prisons.

What is the government doing? Where is the government? It is doing nothing. It is nowhere to be seen.

The Liberals could send a strong message to the criminals by putting our bill on the agenda. While they think about it, gangs continue to call the shots and wage war on our streets.

When will the government take the fight against organized crime seriously?

Oral Questions

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we have conferences with all of our counterparts, especially Minister Bonnardel and Minister Jolin-Barrette, we talk about organized crime all the time.

We are focused on making investments. We have invested \$132 million to address weapons and the gangs that target Quebec. We also made a \$42-million investment in the building safer communities fund.

Through these investments, we have made efforts that have yielded results, namely a drop in organized criminal activity, such as car theft.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the NDP leader, who said the Liberal government will always step in to make sure unions have no power. The minister's section 107 referrals took away workers' rights to strike. As a result of this, Conservatives believe that the Liberal government has lost the confidence of the House of Commons.

This puts the NDP and the NDP leader in a tough spot. Will the NDP leader support his own words and support workers or continue to prop up the NDP-Liberal government? Will the government throw its coalition buddy a line and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would think this was not from the party that supported the anti-union, oppressive Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. We would think this was not from the party who has in its own policy handbook the fact that it will be bringing in right-to-work, Alabama-style legislation to the House. We would think this was not the party that refused to debate that very motion this morning in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's defence of his decision to take away a worker's right to strike is to talk about some things from a few years ago. Unions have unilaterally condemned section 107 referrals. The NDP leader said that he intervened to take away unions' power. That is true. He took away the Teamsters' right to strike. He took away the ILWU 514's right to strike, but when Unifor 1541 asked him to intervene to prevent union busting, the minister disappeared.

However, the leader of the NDP has a choice to make. Will New Democrats keep propping up these guys that make these anti-worker decisions, or will they stand with his words and vote—

The Speaker: I am going to ask all members, please, to remind themselves to keep their voices down so that those who participate using translation can hear the interpretation.

The hon. Minister of Labour and Seniors.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would think that was not the party that opposed 10 sick days for employees in federally regulated industries. We would think that was a party that did not have right-to-work,

Mississippi-style legislation in its policy platform. We would think that was not the party whose very leader decried the involvement of unions in procurement and other processes. The current Conservative Party is anti-worker. The Conservatives have proven it on every single occasion that they are able to. We will always stand up for workers in this country.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the truth will be revealed. The Conservatives have put forward a non-confidence motion using the quote from the NDP leader where he said the Prime Minister is greedy and anti-worker. What will it be?

Will the leader of the NDP sell out Canadians yet again, or has the Prime Minister made another backroom deal that puts both their lust for power over the rights of Canadians?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess that member is back from announcing the housing projects in her riding, which she voted against in the House of Commons. It is a joke. It is a sick joke to watch these Conservatives line up behind this leader and his fake, false bravado, putting motions on the floor of the House. Then, when we ask them to debate those very motions, what do they say? They say no. They refuse to debate their own motion. The Conservatives will not debate help for Canadians. They will not debate tax cuts. They will not debate any support for Canadians in the House of Commons. This is a sick joke.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the global pandemic was hard for retailers, restaurants, the hospitality industry and the tourism industry. Our government took action to help these businesses during that difficult time with programs like the the Canada emergency business account. Now, my constituents want to know what we are doing to help them now that the economy has begun to improve.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change tell us more about the government's plan?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. We will always be there for Canadian families and businesses, in good times and in bad. We have cut taxes for the middle class twice. What has the Conservative leader done? He forced his members to vote against those tax cuts not just once, but twice.

Today, with the GST cut, we are providing meaningful support to families and businesses, but it seems as though the only tax cuts the Conservative leader is prepared to support are those that help his rich friends, like oil company CEOs. It is always the same story with this Conservative leader. His personal interests come before those of Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General exposed \$3.5 billion in ineligible CE-BA loans thanks to the incompetent Liberal-NDP government. They were too incompetent to run this program themselves, so the Liberals gave a sole-source contract to Accenture, a multinational corporation that gave most of the work to Brazilians, not Canadians. Canadians got taken to the cleaners for more than \$300 million.

Why are third party contractors running the government and covering up ministers' incompetence?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to know there exists a report that the opposition can read without a security clearance.

The member opposite and his party claim every single time that they care about small businesses, when in fact every single time we put efforts and support forward for small businesses, they always vote against and decline everything that we do. The fact is that the CEBA loans were there and helped nearly 900,000 small businesses keep their lights on, keep their doors open and keep their employees working. We will continue to be there to support small business.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Auditor General released a bombshell report on the Canada emergency business account. It highlights serious inefficiencies, a lack of government oversight and \$3.5 billion in losses to ineligible recipients. How did we get here? The report outlined that the third party program administrator, Accenture, set its own pricing, wrote its own contracts, ran procurement and received 19 uncompetitive contracts for \$313 million.

Why can the Liberals not administer a government program without breaking a conflict of interest law?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already talked about the fact that there exists a report that the Conservatives can read that they do not need security clearance for, so here is the real bombshell: When it comes to security clearance, there are more allegations that have come forward with regard to foreign interference in the Conservative Party's leadership race, yet the Conservative leader chooses to ignore these security

breaches in his own party. If the Conservative leader actually cared, he would have nothing to hide. Can the leader of the Conservative Party get the clearance, take the briefing and protect this country?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they do not want to hear talk about the Auditor General, who was quite harsh about Liberal corruption this morning. She disclosed that \$3.5 billion from the Canada Emergency Business Account was paid to businesses that were not eligible for it. Worse yet, as in the ArriveCAN scandal, a private company, Accenture, was the party that defined the criteria and the cost for a contract it was awarded. This is becoming a Liberal pattern.

Why do the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs keep illegally enriching a private company to the detriment of Canadian SMEs?

• (1510)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what my colleague said. In fact, her response was very good. I will provide it in French in case my colleague did not hear the interpretation.

We are pleased that the Conservatives can read a report that does not require them to have security clearance. This document, which is very public and everyone can read, mentions one thing that cannot be denied. Were it not for this government, thousands of businesses across the country would not have survived. That is exactly what we are doing. We are ensuring that businesses are able to pay their employees and their expenses, and that they are resilient in the face of the biggest pandemic we have ever had.

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[English]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. This campaign unites people across the country and the world to call out and speak up against acts of gender-based violence. Unlike the Conservative Party, our government has never wavered in supporting survivors of gender-based violence or investing in prevention.

Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth update the House on our government's commitment to addressing this crisis?

Privilege

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our theme, “Come Together, Act Now”, emphasizes that everyone plays a part, especially men and boys, in changing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to gender-based violence.

This dangerous behaviour is pervasive. Even the leader of the Conservative Party embedded misogynistic hashtags in his YouTube videos. Canadian women remember. Our government will never back down on supporting survivors. We created the first national action plan to end gender-based violence, backed by more than half a billion dollars. We will not relent until every woman is safe.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples continue to be killed by the RCMP. In less than a month, nine indigenous people were killed without consequence. The RCMP and provincial authorities must respond toward reconciliation. Indigenous peoples deserve justice. Victims and their families deserve justice.

When will this government finally work with indigenous peoples and law enforcement toward indigenous justice?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank our colleague for that important question. We obviously share her concern and concern of all Canadians when we see these tragic outcomes.

I have talked to the RCMP commissioner, the leadership of the RCMP, about this. I have had a chance to talk to indigenous leaders and territorial premiers about this. We share our colleague's concern about moving toward a circumstance where we can have more indigenous police forces and include indigenous communities in the important law enforcement that Canadians expect in their communities, and we want to do that in partnership with them. We will continue to do that important work and think of the families of these victims at all times.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's border and immigration are key issues for the incoming Trump administration. It is no surprise that the immigration minister was left out of the Prime Minister's Mar-a-Lago visit, given that it is his failures that have now placed our economy at risk.

With IRGC agents hiding behind the refugee program to avoid deportation, can the public safety minister, who did make the trip and whose department finally got around to designating the IRGC as the terrorist group it is, share what he is doing to kick out every single terrorist from Canada?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we see a member of the House constantly making things up.

We are very concerned about any foreign agent working in Canada, whether it is as part of any purported terror. The enforcement agencies in our country work diligently to clamp down on these people, to arrest them, to bring them to justice or to kick them out of the country. We will continue to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of our former colleague, the Hon. Jean-Claude D'Amours, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister responsible for Immigration and Minister responsible for Military Affairs for the Province of New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1515)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED INTIMIDATION DURING PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to add my perspective on the question of privilege raised on Friday by my colleague the member for London—Fanshawe. The opposition deputy House leader explicitly named me and put completely false information on the record regarding my conduct in the lobby as an attempt to deflect from the deliberate, premeditated plan to disrupt the voting proceedings in the House. I am rising to correct the record and put on the record what actually happened.

Prior to the vote, on my way to the washroom, I overheard the Conservative lobby staff instruct Conservative MPs to disrupt proceedings in the chamber once the NDP rose to vote. He then egged them on and said, “The NDP deserves it.” I shook my head, made a comment under my breath and left the lobby. Not only was there no intimidation, but there was no heated exchange of words between me and that staffer. In other words, the Conservative staff was suggesting the NDP deserves to have its House privilege violated, in clear contravention of section 16 of the Standing Orders.

When the vote took place, sure enough, the Conservatives carried out their premeditated plan to deliberately violate the privilege of NDP members. During the vote, I was not able to hear if my vote was registered and I did not know if in fact it had been or not. I stood for some time watching and waiting. After the vote, a number of MPs and staff had gathered, and I repeated that the staffer in question had instructed Conservative MPs to disrupt the House, which he affirmed. I also raised this with the Conservative whip and asked if it amounted to bullying, to which he responded that he knew nothing about it. The question is, if he knew nothing about it, then who instructed the Conservative lobby whip staff to disrupt the House? Was it the leader of the official opposition? If not, did the staff act on their own?

I understand what happens in the lobby is not subject to debate in the House, but the member for Mégantic—L'Érable brought it up, and I need to defend myself and put the truth on the record. The member's fabrication does not end there. In his comment, he said an NDP staffer had to "physically take hold of" me. This is absolutely untrue. When I returned from the washroom and walked through the lobby, I was not manhandled by anyone. On the contrary, I proactively reported what I had overheard to the NDP lobby staff, who were already aware at the time that the Conservatives intended to violate Standing Order 16 by disrupting the House when the NDP got up to vote. This was reported to the clerk so the Speaker would be informed and aware.

It is deeply disturbing for the Conservatives to resort to fabricating such a story to malign me and the hard-working staff of the NDP. Mr. Speaker, not only are the member's comments completely untrue, but I think as you deliberate, you should be aware of the premeditation and intentional nature of the disruption of Standing Order 16 by the Conservative MPs on Thursday. The truth needs to be told and I hope this information will assist you in that deliberation.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Vancouver East.

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• (1520)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, but it is not related to the previous topic.

As we know, part of the Speaker's job is to maintain order in the House. I know it is not always easy, especially these days, and I know our friends in the NDP sit far away from the Speaker. However, they do sit very close to us, and they often protest very loudly. We are having a hard time hearing the interpretation. They are disturbing us. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to pay attention to what is happening in that corner of the House, because it is making things difficult for us.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for La Prairie for his intervention.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is rising on a point of order.

Privilege

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED INTIMIDATION DURING PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reserve the right to come back to this question with a more comprehensive response.

However, I could not help but stand up and respond to a few of the erroneous points the NDP member just raised. I want to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for pointing out that the New Democrats are often selective in their sanctimony about decorum in this place. They are often extremely noisy, heckling members when they have the floor, including during votes. They have suddenly found their "holier than thou" gene on this type of thing when they are often guilty of it themselves.

With regard to the specific allegations, I can tell the NDP member there are witnesses who saw everything our colleagues have pointed out. As well, we have videotape of the erratic and unhinged behaviour the NDP members exhibited when they marched up to the Speaker's chair. If she wants to talk about decorum, this was marching up to the Speaker's chair, hurling insults at the Speaker, after the House had already been adjourned, to the point where NDP members had to be taken back because they were violating the space of members of our side, most of whom were seated, calm and collected.

I do not know what happened to cause such erratic and unhinged behaviour on the part of the NDP. I will not speculate on that. However, I will be coming back with a more substantive response, including the eyewitness testimony of members who were in the lobby, who heard that member hurl abuse and profane and vulgar language at a staffer. An elected MP yelling insults at and using profane language against a staffer would also rise to the level of unparliamentary behaviour. As the member pointed out, it happened in the lobby, not in the chamber.

I would just point out that it is your job, Mr. Speaker, to enforce decorum during votes and during speeches, which you did that night. The Speaker made a judgment call on aspects of decorum that evening. Other than that, I believe that is where the matter should rest.

It was only after the NDP started making false and defamatory accusations, which I dare say they would never repeat outside the chamber, that we were forced to show Canadians the actual truth about what happened that evening, which consisted of NDP members of Parliament completely losing their cool, coming over in an aggressive and hostile manner, hurling abuse and yelling at members who were seated, calm and collected. That is the true story about what happened that night, and we will absolutely correct the record.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege. I take no pleasure in standing here. I am just building on what our House leader would have to say in the report he will be coming back with, with further comments.

I was one of those witnesses that evening in the lobby. I want to bring a little clarification to what the member opposite said. Unfortunately, she used her position of power to bully a staffer and used inappropriate language when dealing with that one staffer. I immediately let the whip's office and our House leader's office know. It should not stand. We do not treat the people who serve us here in the House in that type of manner.

The Speaker: I hope to come back to the House as soon as possible after we've heard the interventions that some members have indicated they are going to be coming back to the House with.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1525)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (natural health products).

[English]

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

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, in relation to Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on first nation lands. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and Standing Order 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 72nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled "Pilot Project to Include Inuit Languages on Federal Election Ballots in Nunavut".

* * *

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-422, An Act to amend the Canada Disability Benefit Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing a bill to protect the Canada disability benefit, and the persons who will receive it, from clawbacks. I thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for seconding it and for the work that she does in her community for persons with disabilities.

People with disabilities living in poverty experience the cruelty of clawbacks first-hand. Whenever they get the slightest increase in income, their critical government benefits are reduced. The skimming of benefits that they are entitled to pushes them farther behind. The era of perpetuating poverty through the Liberals' cruel and callous clawbacks, and those of the Conservatives before them, has to end. The negative impacts go farther than just bad economic policy. It is bad social policy too. People with disabilities are prevented from having a live-in relationship, marrying, leaving an abusive relationship or even taking on roommates; if they do, they risk losing their critical benefits.

With my bill, in relation to the Canada disability benefit, which is already woefully inadequate, the government can amend and modernize the policy to bring in a new era of disability benefits that empowers people instead of punishing them.

In closing, I raise my hands to the disability community and countless advocates who have continued to raise the issue. Again, I call on the government to do what is right. It should adopt the bill, fix this historical wrong and make sure that people with disabilities can live the life they choose.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, presented on Monday, November 25, be concurred in.

It is my honour to stand here today. I will be sharing my time with the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs wants to embark on a study to see the appearance of the member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre. The report states:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, November 21, 2024, your committee has agreed to report the following:

That the committee report to the House that the MP for Edmonton Centre appear before the committee for two hours independently by Friday, December 6, 2024, immediately following the completion and reporting back of C-61 to the House, and that the report is tabled by the Chair in the House as soon as possible and no later than Monday, November 25, 2024.

Routine Proceedings

The reason we are going through this important report is that the former minister, the member for Edmonton Centre, needs to come clean about his actions. We have all heard about the other Randy story, as GHI, a company he co-owned, was bidding on government contracts. He claimed he was not, but it came out that he actually was. He also claimed to be of indigenous heritage when he is not. Moreover, his company was falsely bidding on indigenous contracts, but his company is not indigenous.

A recent article in the news states:

Alberta MP [from Edmonton Centre] has resigned from cabinet amid allegations about his business dealings and criticism of his shifting claims about his Indigenous ancestry.

“The prime minister and [the MP for Edmonton Centre] have agreed that [the MP] will step away from cabinet effective immediately. [The MP for Edmonton Centre] will focus on clearing the allegations made against him,” a spokesperson for [the] Prime Minister...said in a statement.

This is why it is so important that the former minister appear at the INAN committee. Previous to that, he was scheduled to appear as minister. The NDP-Liberal government has tried to say that, since he is no longer a sitting minister, he does not need to appear at committee to answer the allegations made against him.

That is simply unacceptable. It does not change that he was a long-serving member of the corrupt NDP-Liberal government and that there are three very significant issues he needs to answer for to the Canadian public, and most of all, to indigenous communities. One thing colleagues of mine in the House have really highlighted is that impersonating an indigenous person or an indigenous company is a severe offence. It is fraudulent, and it is something that is just simply not acceptable for anybody in Canada, let alone a sitting minister of the NDP-Liberal government.

We have also heard that the NDP-Liberals are trying to do something to obfuscate, and that is to have the former minister appear but do it with all the current and relevant ministers to INAN at the same time. That would swamp the meeting, with three ministers and the member for Edmonton Centre appearing all at once. We are asking and calling on the former minister to appear individually to answer questions on what he is doing. Simply put, the amount of time he will have at committee will be well used to appear individually, at least for an hour, if not longer, to try to answer some of the allegations made against him.

It is a concern for Canadians across the country. We spoke about the green slush fund before and this corruption within the front benches. Again, it is not just the odd allegation here and there. It is corruption at the highest level from sitting ministers of the government. It was only recently, just a few weeks ago, that the former minister was cut loose, as the news article stated. He held on for many months. The Prime Minister kept him in his spot, regardless of the allegations. More allegations started to pop up as a result, and it got even worse as the member was allowed to remain in his minister's chair. I give credit to my colleagues for putting pressure on the former minister. It was said that the Prime Minister asked him to step down or resign, or however anyone wants to phrase it. It was really after the opposition, the Conservatives on this side, caused so much pressure with the Prime Minister and Canadians across the country.

• (1530)

It is even reflected in the polls. When we look at the polls across the country, the Liberals and the NDP are really struggling because of these kinds of allegations.

It is not as though they deal with allegations quickly. They deal with them after months and months of pressure, of people watching videos on YouTube and social media, asking why the minister is still sitting when he is under this cloud of allegations and suspicion around some pretty significant issues. Impersonating an indigenous person in Canada, and doing so as a sitting minister, is really beyond the pale.

This is why it is necessary for the member for Edmonton Centre to come to committee. He needs to give his responses to the questions from our members. This needs to happen with a full meeting, not as an attachment with a bunch of other ministers there getting asked questions at the same time. We are asking for him to appear as an individual.

Canadians and indigenous people across the country deserve to have him answer for what he has done and maybe clarify what he was trying to do with what ended up happening, what the allegations are. He has spoken many times in the House, and he has never been able to get out of the shadow of these allegations. As I said before, the cloud has gotten darker over him, whether in terms of the other Randy, GHI as a co-owned company or bidding on government contracts as a sitting minister.

We just spoke about it at length for 20 minutes. The sitting Minister of Environment was doing the exact same thing. It is a sad state of affairs when this acceptable corruption is in the front benches of the NDP-Liberals today. We look forward to getting a chance to ask some tough questions of the former minister. It was the Prime Minister who said, “sunny ways.” I think we all remember that from 2015. The best thing for integrity of the system is to shine a light, to have no secrets. This was the Prime Minister's saying. He talks about slogans of ours; “sunny ways” was his slogan. Where has that gone today? All we have is government cover-up after cover-up.

The Speaker is even challenging the government to produce unredacted documents to the green slush fund. It is not just that we are trying to shine a light on some of these accusations of a current minister and the current Prime Minister, but it needs to actually see the light of day. We need to see the minister in the INAN committee. He needs to answer for the serious allegations against him. I think indigenous people across the country and Canadians at large are expecting that.

How could a sitting minister so obviously do things that are fraudulent and keep being able to do so for as long as he was? It was only after relentless pressure from the Conservative Party on this side, as well as facts that just kept churning up as time went on that, finally, as the article said, “The prime minister and the MP [for Edmonton Centre] agreed that [the MP] will step away from cabinet effective immediately.”

Speaker's Ruling

It is a challenge for him to actually do this. In the article, it said the MP from Edmonton Centre “will focus on clearing the allegations made against him”, as “a spokesperson for [the] Prime Minister...said in a statement”. Here is a great opportunity to do exactly that as an individual: clearing the allegations against him.

* * *

● (1535)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

SPEAKER'S RULING—DESIGNATION OF SUPPLY DAYS

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on November 21, 2024, by the member for La Prairie regarding the designation of the final four supply days for the period ending on December 10, 2024.

In his point of order, the member for La Prairie asked whether the Chair would intervene to designate the remaining opposition days in the hypothetical case that the two questions of privilege before the House remain under consideration through the end of the current supply period. The member said that the Standing Orders provide for four more opposition days this fall and that, in the past, the Chair has designated days to meet the requirements of the Standing Orders. He also raised the possibility of temporarily setting aside the questions of privilege if it is necessary for the making of appropriations.

[English]

In my statement of November 21, 2024, on the same topic, I encouraged the House leaders to discuss a solution that would enable the House to reconcile these various responsibilities. The discussions do not seem to have been productive. Although the government has designated three opposition days, including today's, the Chair notes that the House has been unable to take up the business of supply at the required time. The House remains in the situation described by the member for La Prairie.

The House is solely responsible for granting supplies to the Crown, as provided by Standing Order 80(1). To that end, at the start of each session, it establishes a continuing order of the day for the consideration of supply. That order, as *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, explains at page 838, “remains on the agenda as an item of Government Orders and may be taken up at any time at the government’s discretion.”

In other words, the designation of the days allotted to the business of supply is normally a prerogative of the government, and this business is considered during Government Orders.

● (1540)

[Translation]

The House executes its supply responsibilities through a very specific mechanism, which is described in Standing Order 81. Adopting one or more appropriations bills granting sums to defray charges and expenses of the federal public administration is the final step of that process. For the current supply period, such a bill must be adopted by December 10. Under Standing Order 81(17), the Chair is required, no later than the last day of this period, to in-

terrupt proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of these appropriations.

That said, one principle of our parliamentary government is that members have the right to air grievances before considering the government's financial requirements. There exists a vital balance between grievances and supply, the former being considered on supply days. What is to be done if the government is unable to designate those days?

The member for La Prairie raised the Chair's role in this situation by citing an important precedent. On Thursday, March 22, 1990, a dispute between the government and the opposition prevented the last two opposition days that could be allotted for the supply period ending on March 26 from being designated. Consequently, on that day, Speaker Fraser designated Friday, March 23, and Monday, March 26, 1990, as opposition days. In a ruling rendered on March 26, 1990, on page 9759 of the Debates, he explained, and I quote:

The Standing Orders list the number of allotted days there will be in each supply period and where the Government has failed to designate sufficient days to meet the requirements of the Standing Orders, by attrition those days left in the period must become allotted days, when no other alternative is possible in order to comply with the Standing Orders.... [H]ence Friday and today had to become opposition days, whether specifically designated by the Government or not.

However, the House was not considering questions of privilege when Speaker Fraser had to rule on the issue.

[English]

In the statement of November 21, 2024, the Chair outlined the House's responsibility to grant supplies, in accordance with the specific mechanisms provided by the Standing Orders. The Chair also remarked that a privilege motion must take priority over all other orders of the day; still, this practice is not absolute. As we have seen on a few occasions this fall, the House may, through a special order or under a unique specific standing order, require a particular action to be taken at a particular time. For example, pursuant to Standing Order 66, the House resumed consideration of motions to concur in committee reports after debate on them had been adjourned, even though these motions were orders of the day.

In the same vein, the continuing order of the day for supply enables, and in fact the Standing Orders require, the House to dispose of supply matters by December 10, 2024. Despite the questions of privilege before the House, the Chair must conclude that the provisions of the Standing Orders governing the consideration of supply remain in effect. The Chair further concludes that the balance between the allotted days and the adoption of appropriations must be maintained and that, as a result, the remaining supply days must take place.

● (1545)

[Translation]

Since four supply days are yet to be designated and 48 hours' notice is required for opposition motions, unless the House decides otherwise, the Chair declares that the last four sitting days in the current period—namely, Thursday, December 5, Friday, December 6, Monday, December 9, and Tuesday, December 10, 2024—will be allotted days.

[English]

During the sittings of Thursday, December 5; Friday, December 6; and Tuesday, December 10, consideration of the questions of privilege under Orders of the Day will resume once the House has finished the debates on the business of supply, if possible.

As for the sitting of Monday, December 9, the questions of privilege will be taken up at the start of the sitting and considered until Orders of the Day are called at noon.

I thank all members for their attention.

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 as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the debate has been going on for quite some time, and I think we have asked every possible question that can be asked.

In relation to the news we heard today regarding foreign interference and the Conservative leadership campaign in particular, we heard something quite interesting, which was in regard to the member for Calgary Nose Hill and whether or not she was approached by individuals, in particular foreign individuals who were not Canadian citizens, to influence her position on the campaign.

My question for the member is this: Is he aware that just recently in the industry committee, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, who was at the committee, once approached by the CBC, immediately left the room, leaving all of her stuff on the table, and is now back in her office participating in the meeting remotely? Does the member not think it would be best for her to confront the situation and to answer honestly about whether or not she was approached by individuals regarding interference in the leadership race that elected the current Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, for Canadians out there, I will say that the motion we are talking about today is to have the former NDP-Liberal minister, who had to resign in shame, appear at the INAN committee to answer for the issues he has really been a part of, to clear his name.

The article states that the MP for Edmonton Centre “‘will focus on clearing the allegations made against him,’ a spokesperson for [the] Prime Minister...said in a statement.” Once again the Liberals are trying to change the channel on their scandal-ridden government.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the company of the disgraced member for Edmonton Centre applied fraudulently for two government contracts, representing itself as a wholly indigenous-owned company when that was not

Privilege

true, in a disgraceful effort to steal contracts from legitimate indigenous businesses.

The Prime Minister was aware that the minister did that, yet for days he defended him. It was only when the Edmonton Police announced it was launching a criminal investigation that the minister was finally bounced from cabinet. What does that say about the low ethical standards set by the Prime Minister? Could his reluctance to fire the member for Edmonton Centre from cabinet have anything to do with the fact that, like the member for Edmonton Centre, the Prime Minister is a cultural appropriator?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, that is a good question and is relevant to the subject at hand. For the Canadians watching out there, that is what a proper question to somebody across the way looks like. Instead of the Liberals' trying to obfuscate and cover up their scandals, there is a great question.

The member is very aware of the scandal-ridden government, the green slush fund and the many efforts the government has made to cover up its scandals and corruption et cetera. I know it is alarming for most Canadians, and for us as well, how long it took the Prime Minister. The minister was still sitting on the front benches for weeks under the dark clouds of the allegations, and it just kept getting worse.

There was a shift in the last week though. Normally the NDP-Liberals, when they do not want their minister to answer for something that is corrupt, they have somebody else answer the question for them. The minister had to answer the questions himself, which showed there was some erosion in the relationship between the Prime Minister and the particular minister.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention, because something needed to be said about this issue that has brought shame on this Parliament. I would like to commend him, as he is a very active member of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

I am wondering how first nations are reacting to seeing a prominent government member misusing indigenous identity to gain access to contracts. It is quite scandalous. I would like to hear more from my colleague about the indigenous point of view. We know that at least 5% of federal contracts are awarded to indigenous businesses to promote their economy. It is also a question of resilience. However, at the end of the day, these contracts are given to non-indigenous businesses.

What does my colleague think about that?

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the member from the Bloc is also a sitting member of the INAN committee.

Privilege

I can tell him how first nations feel in my community; they feel absolutely disgusted by former actions of the current Prime Minister and the latest actions to shield a former minister who has been fraudulent in his claims about being indigenous. It is shameful, and in the next election, they are voting Conservative.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, I rise in the House of Commons to address a matter that has serious implications for public trust, accountability and the integrity of our democratic institutions. It is a matter that speaks to the very principles that Canadians hold dear, the principles of transparency, honesty and the fair application of our laws.

This is an issue that is both deeply troubling and critically important to the future of our nation. It is an issue that strikes at the heart of fairness and the actions we expect from those in power.

We live in a country that prides itself on its commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We recognize that this is a journey, a process of healing, understanding and building trust between indigenous communities and the Canadian government. However, this process is only meaningful when it is rooted in honesty and respect.

The issue at hand is the controversial conduct surrounding the former minister of employment, the member for Edmonton Centre, and his past business dealings, specifically his connection to Global Health Imports, a company he co-owned. This matter not only raises questions about potential conflicts of interest, but it also brings to the forefront serious concerns regarding the manipulation of indigenous business procurement programs for personal and political gain.

This issue calls into question both the ethical standards expected of our public officials and the integrity of programs designed to benefit indigenous entrepreneurs and communities.

We are faced with a troubling situation in which an individual, a public servant no less, is accused of exploiting the very tools that were meant to uplift and empower indigenous communities for personal advantage. The procurement strategy for indigenous businesses was established by the government to ensure that indigenous communities could participate meaningfully in federal contracting opportunities, and yet we are now confronted with the possibility that this program is being misused by individuals with questionable motives.

The member for Edmonton Centre has long portrayed himself as an ally of indigenous communities and, at times, a person of indigenous descent. However, his claims about his heritage have shifted dramatically over time, raising serious questions about the sincerity and accuracy of his statements. In 2017, the member referred to himself as non-status adopted Cree, tracing his ancestry to his great-grandmother, who he claimed was Cree. This claim was repeated in Parliament, where he spoke proudly of his heritage as part of his personal narrative.

However, just a few years later, the member changed his story. In an interview in 2021, he stated that he was a white, cisgender member of the community. He publicly distanced himself from any indigenous identity, acknowledging instead that his heritage was tied

to a status Métis family member through adoption. The stark shift was quite sudden, and the timing of these changes raises questions about his true understanding of his heritage.

The member for Edmonton Centre, along with his former business partner, Stephen Anderson, co-founded Global Health Imports at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The company initially focused on distributing personal protective equipment, such as masks, gloves and face shields. It was, at the time, a business venture that appeared to be in line with the urgent needs of the day, as the global health crisis required swift and wide-ranging action.

However, the issue arose when GHI began to identify itself as a wholly indigenous-owned business in federal procurement bids, claims that were made to gain access to preferential treatment under Canada's indigenous procurement programs. These claims were made even though neither the member nor Anderson appeared to have verifiable indigenous heritage that met the strict criteria for participation in the PSIB.

While the government's procurement strategy allows for preferential treatment to companies that are generally genuinely indigenous-owned, it requires that such companies meet clear criteria, such as being at least 51% owned by indigenous individuals. As it turned out, neither the member for Edmonton Centre nor Stephen Anderson could demonstrate they actually met that requirement.

Global Health Imports, as we all know, was never registered on the official list of eligible indigenous businesses. Furthermore, neither the member nor Anderson ever substantiated their indigenous heritage when questioned.

● (1555)

The core of the issue is the deliberate misrepresentation of GHI's ownership. By falsely claiming to be indigenous-owned, the owner sought to leverage government programs meant for indigenous people, diverting opportunities and funds from businesses that genuinely meet the criteria. This raises significant questions about the truthfulness of the claims made by the member for Edmonton Centre and the appearance of a deliberate attempt to misappropriate federal resources, especially given that those claims were central to securing lucrative government contracts.

The government has been unequivocal about the need for companies to prove their status before accessing these very programs and yet there appears to be no official follow-up or verification by the Minister of Indigenous Services or her department in this case. The reality is that GHI did not meet the criteria to qualify for indigenous procurement programs. This is not just a matter of a failed business bid; this is a matter of ethical conduct. This is about whether the rules governing indigenous procurement are being followed and whether those who falsely claim indigenous identity are allowed to exploit the very programs meant to support indigenous businesses.

Indigenous leaders, such as Shannin Metatawabin, the CEO of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, have voiced their concerns about this kind of behaviour. He stated that these incidents are symptomatic of broader problems within the PSIB, noting that fraudulent claims of misrepresentation are undermining the program and ultimately harming the various communities the PSIB is meant to support. This lack of transparency and accountability is quite troubling. Arthur Schafer, the director of the Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics at the University of Manitoba, has argued that in order for the programs like the PSIB to remain effective, the government must hold individuals accountable when they misrepresent themselves as indigenous or try to exploit these programs for personal gain.

As we move forward, there are several lessons we must learn from this controversy. First, we must demand greater transparency from public officials, in particular when they are involved in decisions that affect vulnerable communities. Second, we must strengthen the safeguards in place to prevent the exploitation of procurement programs meant for indigenous businesses. The public must have confidence that all elected officials are held to the highest standard of ethical conduct and that means an independent, thorough investigation into the member for Edmonton Centre's actions and his potential breaches of the Conflict of Interest Act. We must have transparency into whether his financial interests in GHI influenced the awarding of government contracts and whether any rules were broken in that process. It means we must also examine and even re-examine the strength of our ethics laws and those covering indigenous peoples, including the indigenous procurement programs, and ensure that these programs are not abused by officials looking to profit at the expense of indigenous communities. If they are, we need to know what measures we can take to strengthen our systems, close those loopholes and ensure that these programs are used for that intended purpose to empower and uplift indigenous peoples, not enrich the privileged few.

We cannot ignore these concerns. The very integrity of our democratic institutions depends on the people who hold positions of power living up to the highest ethical standards. It is time for the member for Edmonton Centre to answer for his actions and for the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that this type of behaviour is not tolerated in the future. Of course, as we look into the broader implications of the case, we must ask ourselves how many other cases like this are out there. How many more individuals are attempting to pass themselves off as indigenous to access resources and advantages that should be reserved for the very communities we are striving to support?

Privilege

As I wrap up I would like to move a motion, seconded by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs presented to the House of Monday, November 25, 2024, be not now concurred in but that it be recommitted to the committee for further consideration, with instruction that it report back to the House no later than Monday January 27, 2025, on whether the Member for Edmonton Centre, who was the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages when the House adopted an order on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, requiring his attendance before that committee, has appeared in conformity with that order.

• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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.): Madam Speaker, no one is surprised that the Conservatives continue this multi-million dollar, self-serving game. They have pulled out yet another concurrence report, and then they are going to send the report back to committee. There is nothing new there. That is the tactic that they have been using now for weeks, and I will get the opportunity to expand on that.

However, the question I have for the member is: Why is the Conservative Party so focused on character assassination more than on the needs of Canadians?

We have seen this illustrated all of the time. A good example of that would be when that very member decided to vote against giving a GST holiday for taxpayers in Canada even though, as a political entity, the Conservatives like to give the false impression that they want to cut taxes.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I wrote that down: "A multi-million dollar, self-serving" venture. I would argue that is exactly what the member for Edmonton Centre tried to do.

The member for Edmonton Centre and the company he co-owned checked a box claiming to be wholly indigenous-owned, thereby bidding on a contract reserved for indigenous-owned businesses. The hypocrisy is unbelievable here. We have a minister who had no problem trying to push down legitimate indigenous-owned businesses to try to secure and enrich himself; it is unbelievable.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I are both vice-chairs of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. I thank him for his intervention.

Privilege

I would like to know whether the amendment he just moved has anything to do with the fact that the Liberals tried to pull a fast one on us in committee. We wanted the official languages minister to appear and answer the committee's questions. At the time, the member for Edmonton Centre was that minister. However, the Liberals tried to send us the new Minister of Official Languages, the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. Is today's motion and the time being taken up in Parliament an indication of the same Liberal manoeuvring?

I have a second question. In his speech, my colleague talked about the penalties that should be imposed on the member for Edmonton Centre. I would like my colleague to elaborate on that. What consequences should the member face, apart from being humiliated in the House and bringing shame to his political party?

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from the Bloc across the way for the question and for his work on the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

In short, yes it is. As the member correctly pointed out in his question, the Liberals tried to play games on the committee and tried to ensure that it was the new, interim minister for employment covering for the member for Edmonton Centre who was going to actually appear before committee. Clearly, that was not the intent of the motion. The intent of the motion is to get the member for Edmonton Centre and ensure, order him, if you will, to appear before committee.

In terms of what punishments he should face, I guess that is up to different agencies. I would hope that there is enough shame brought to him and the Liberal Party that indigenous people have second thoughts about voting for Liberals. Also, hopefully he decides that he is not ready to run in the next election.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy that I have a chance to stand up today, because I do have some questions that I am hoping the member can shed some light on.

We know that the Conservatives have been calling for an election for about six months now. On Friday, there was a non-confidence vote that was put forward by the Conservatives, which was attacking the leader of the NDP. When the Conservatives were asked to suspend the question of privilege by the government House leader to get unanimous consent to be able to debate this exact non-confidence motion that they put forward, they said no.

Perhaps the member could clarify, as I think Canadians are curious. What is going on? Where is the logic behind saying “no” to the exact motion that the Conservatives put forward to see an outcome that they are pushing for?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, that came from the party that not once, not twice, but multiple times voted confidence in the government, prolonging the Liberal power grab that we continue to see. However, members need not worry. There will be another motion very soon. The member opposite does not need to worry.

However, right now our focus is on getting to the bottom of what the member for Edmonton Centre may or may not have done with

his company applying for government contracts and claiming to be wholly indigenous-owned.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to try to explain, as best as I can, why we are having this debate this afternoon. It is quite unfortunate, but the Conservatives have been focused on character assassination, even back 10 years ago when the leader of the Liberal Party was first elected as leader. Absolutely nothing has changed over the last 10-plus years. They identify an individual and then attack the very character of that person.

In the many years that I have known the member from Edmonton Centre, I never had him come up to me in any fashion whatsoever to try to give any sort of an impression that he was indigenous himself. I really look at a lot of the things the Conservatives do as ways to try to discredit individuals inside the chamber. Quite frankly, it is at a very great cost. I often say, which Hansard will clearly demonstrate, that over the years, the Conservative Party has focused on destroying the characters of elected officials in the House of Commons. Meanwhile, we have a Prime Minister and a government that continue to be focused on Canadians.

While Conservatives try to sidestep important issues and bring in character assassinations, as a government, we have been focused on Canadians to ensure they are a part of the solution in building a stronger, healthier economy. We are focusing in on Canada's middle class, and those aspiring to be a part of it, while focusing on ensuring that we have an economy that works for all Canadians. That has been the government's focus for years.

The type of response we get from members of the Conservative Party is for them to consistently attack individuals. There might be the odd one that steps up to the plate to say something that is a little bit more constructive, but that is discouraged in the Conservative caucus. There are Conservative MPs on the other side who have made it very clear that they do not have a choice.

There are people in the Conservative leader's office who actually follow members, who stalk them to see what they are saying. That made national news last week with a story about the degree to which Conservative MPs are being stalked within their own caucus. They get stars if they do something right, and they get some of those stars taken away if they do something wrong. For example, if they talk to Liberal members of Parliament, that is a bad thing, according to the Conservative caucus and their new rules.

If Conservative members want to get a star, well, they can maybe attack the character of someone, just like what we are witnessing today. By far, the best way to get those simple stars is to repeat the slogans. Today, we can see how many times members stood up to say their slogans. That is because it is encouraged. They are told that they will get stars if they do that. There are Conservative members who are talking about how freedom within the caucus has become scarcer as a direct result of their leader. If they want to talk about character assassination, I would like to share some thoughts about that with regarding the leader of the Conservative Party that Canadians should be aware of.

• (1610)

This multi-million dollar, self-serving game the Conservatives are playing today, and have been playing for the last six weeks on the floor of the House of Commons, has not only a substantive financial cost, but also a very negative impact on the legislative agenda. We would have seen legislation to protect children from online predators, legislation to protect sexually abused women and others within the Canadian forces by taking their cases out of military court and putting them into civilian courts and legislation to deal with Canada's supply lines. We could have talked about the fall economic statement, not to mention private members' bills, opposition day motions and all forms of legislation that could have been debated, but we are not. Why is that? It is because the Conservative leadership has made the decision to filibuster on the floor of the House of Commons.

We talk about character assassination, and we are witnessing the attack by the Conservatives toward the former minister, the member for Edmonton Centre. I would suggest that the one orchestrating it is the leader of the Conservative Party, who needs to look in the mirror. After all, he is the one in borderline contempt of Parliament with the multi-million dollar game he is orchestrating on the floor of the House of Commons. That is what is happening today. We are seeing a political game because the Conservative Party believes that they know better. They know better that unredacted documents should be given to the RCMP without any hesitation. That is what the leader of the Conservative Party believes, even though the RCMP and the Auditor General of Canada both say no.

The Conservatives are going to take into consideration, as a part of their filibuster, a serious issue of indigenous businesses and opportunities and use it to attack the character of a member of Parliament. However, I would suggest that we need to start reflecting more on the attitudes and the types of things the leader of the Conservative Party is doing because it is purely self-serving and not in Canada's best interest. Here is a leader who is solely focused on preventing healthy debate in the chamber.

My colleague posed a question earlier about the foreign interference issue. Again, it is rooted right back with the leader of the Conservative Party. When the Conservatives criticize the member for Edmonton Centre, members can listen to the complaints and the issues regarding the leader of the Conservative Party.

• (1615)

Mr. Shivaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have a question of relevance. We are here to talk about the appearance of the member for—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that there is great latitude, and I expect that before the end of his speech, the hon. parliamentary secretary will come to relevance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, if the member was around a bit more and listened to a lot of the discussions that have been taking place over the last number of weeks, he would know that it is absolutely relevant as the Conservatives are starting to use motions of this nature to attack the actions of members of Parliament. They are trying to say that this is not relevant.

Privilege

After all, I am reflecting on the motivations and the character of the Conservative leader. They will be super sensitive if it is a Conservative who we are talking about, but Liberal members of Parliament are free game. That is their attitude. They try to prevent members from being able to express the reality of what is taking place in the chamber today. I say shame on the member for interrupting what is, in fact, an important statement that needs to be made.

Yes, the issue of indigenous businesses is of the utmost importance. In fact, over the weekend, we had a wonderful historical moment in the province of Manitoba. On Portage and Main, on the 20th floor of a building that is now owned by Red River Métis, David Chartrand and the Métis nation signed off on a treaty. We now have the Manitoba Métis national government on treaty.

Whether it is signing that important document just this past weekend, or literally the tens of millions of dollars that the Liberals have provided to encourage and support indigenous businesses, we have been there. However, we do not hear that being talked about because it does not fit the Conservatives' narrative. That is why it is important for people who follow the debates that take place in the House of Commons to not be fooled by what the Conservative Party does and has been doing for the last six weeks.

People should not think this is about concern over indigenous businesses. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is a part of the game that the Conservatives are playing, and that game happens to be a filibuster to prevent the government from doing the business that would support indigenous Canadians, and all Canadians, in many different ways. They then use that to criticize and single out a particular member. I will continue pointing out the hypocrisy that is coming out of the office of the leader of the Conservative Party.

As I was pointing out, the member for Kingston and the Islands, the deputy House leader of the government, made it very clear how another member of the House, which is being reported on in national news today, was interfered with through foreign interference. Why is that important to note? It is important because we are talking about the leader of the Conservative Party and his unwillingness to get a security clearance. Members can think about that. He is the only leader in the House of Commons to do that. If someone wants to be an intern for the Conservative Party, they are required to get a security clearance, but not if someone is the leader of the Conservative Party.

Today, through the news, we found out that there is a direct link to the leader of the Conservative Party during his leadership campaign, which was interfered with through foreign interference. Do members remember, a year ago, how often we were hearing about the issue of foreign interference? The Conservatives were jumping all over each other to raise the issue, until we caught wind that there were maybe some Conservatives at play and it might not necessarily reflect well on them.

Privilege

• (1620)

How the attitudes quickly changed. When is the last time we saw them stand up in question period and pose a question on foreign interference? I suspect it has a lot to do with the fact that the Conservative leader does not want to talk about the issue anymore because of something there that is preventing him from wanting to get the security clearance. The news story today is all about leadership interference. That might be one aspect of it, but I think there is more to it. I think there is more to why the Leader of the Opposition does not want to get the security clearance, and I believe Canadians have a right to know.

If members across the way want to use this particular report to reflect on the member for Edmonton Centre, while they stand up and they talk about that, what they should also be doing is reflecting, maybe looking in the mirror and thinking about the leader of the Conservative Party. Should they not be applying the same sort of pressure, the same sort of tactics, maybe even within their own caucus, and call into question why their own leader refuses to get that security clearance?

I believe foreign interference is one of those reasons that had a direct impact on his own leadership and one of the reasons why he might even be the leader of the Conservative Party today. I understand that Patrick Brown—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Conservatives laugh. I do not think Patrick Brown was laughing. We have to summon him to committee in order to find the truth. I wonder maybe if we should be summoning him to the bar. That is something the Conservatives like to do. We will have to wait and find out just how open and honest they are with the answers coming from members on that particular committee.

I look forward to hearing some of the results. On the motion that we have, there is an amendment to call and demand that the member for Edmonton Centre go before the committee. As Conservatives tell me all the time, we have unfettered rights here on the floor of the House of Commons. Even if it is a majority government, it does not matter because we have unfettered rights and they have to be respected no matter what, according to Conservatives.

I am wondering if the member for Calgary Nose Hill should actually be summoned to the very same committee that Patrick Brown is going to be. It would be interesting to hear her thoughts on foreign interference. One day she is supporting Patrick Brown, and then there is a conversation that takes place. Many would suggest that it qualifies as foreign interference. Then the next day, she is no longer supporting Patrick Brown. There is something there. Then a week passes by and she does not go back to supporting him. When I say supporting, I believe she was actually the co-campaign manager or something of that fact. We need to get to the bottom of that.

Much like the motion that is being suggested here, I would suggest to all the committee members, as opposed to being instructed by the House of Commons, maybe they should be proactive and ask the member for Calgary Nose Hill to appear before the committee. That would be very helpful. I would encourage the member for Calgary Nose Hill to volunteer.

When I read the story, she seemed to be offside with what the others were saying. Where have we heard that before? Is that not the same thing that is happening with the member for Edmonton Centre and other allegations that are being made, where the member for Edmonton Centre does not agree with those allegations?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's different, though. That is when it is a Conservative.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: As my colleague points out, we cannot mix Conservatives and Liberals. There are totally different standards.

• (1625)

At the end of the day, I think we should be asking the committee to have the member for Calgary Nose Hill come before the same committee, maybe following Patrick Brown, so that we can hear from Patrick Brown how foreign interference was directly involved in the leadership of the Conservative Party, the very same leadership convention in which the current leader was elected. The current leader refuses to get that security clearance. Why? It is because he wants to be naive on the issue.

It would be really good to see the two of them sitting there and being held accountable on foreign interference. I suspect that we are not going to get a motion to that effect coming from the Conservative Party, because, after all, transparency only matters when it is Conservatives attacking and using character assassination against Liberals. That is all that matters from the Conservative point of view. There is a responsibility of accountability for the Conservatives too. I will continue to push for that accountability.

On a final note, I encourage the leader of the Conservative Party to do the right thing and get the security clearance.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North gets in here, all sanctimonious, with all sorts of machinations of what is happening over on the Conservative side, and he is making it up as he goes along. He says that we are bringing forward a filibuster. We are on a different motion from what he was debating this whole time. We are talking about a concurrence report from the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Instead, he goes off on tirades, accusing the member for Calgary Nose Hill of being interfered with, when her own statements to the CBC and the statement she released on social media say that she was not. For him to stand in this place and disparage the comments made by the member for Calgary Nose Hill does a disservice to all hon. members in the House.

He wants to talk about filibustering, yet nobody has spoken more than him in the House since forever in the history of Canada, and definitely at this point in time when we are talking about the issues of both this concurrence motion and the question of privilege as it relates to the green slush fund. Let me just ask the member this. Is he going to continue to slow down the business of the House, or is he going to continue to—

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is truly amazing that the Conservatives are complaining because I am trying to hold them to account for the types of things that they do on the floor of the House of Commons. He talks about the poor member for Calgary Nose Hill. She says that she is innocent. Think about it. Before we pose the question, give it some thought. What are they doing with the member for Edmonton Centre? Where does this double standard come from, seriously?

At the end of the day, they need to understand that it is not only government. There are also opposition responsibilities. I do not see a responsible—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Other opposition members would like to ask questions.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoy listening to the member for Winnipeg North in the House because I find that he always manages to present new arguments on subjects that are not always easy to understand. This time, however, I believe that he is off topic, and I find that disappointing.

In my view, the primary issue is the theft of first nations identity, the fact that people can claim indigenous identity as they see fit in order to access contracts or to give false social licence on behalf of indigenous communities, when indigenous people themselves do not recognize it. That is why the Bloc Québécois supported the motion. I am wondering whether the member for Winnipeg North and his government are embarrassed by this obvious negligence.

The solution is simple. What is needed is a registry created by and for first nations people, so that they themselves can decide who should be recognized as members of their communities. Would the member for Winnipeg North support that?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I apologize in the sense that, if I only had more time, I would have gotten to a number of things that I had listed. For example, as of November 18, 2024, there have been 2,945 businesses listed on the IBD. Of the 2,945, 111 of them are indigenous businesses that are joint ventures, which is greater than the 3%. In 2022, during the first fiscal year of a 5% target, ISC did a comprehensive review of businesses listed on the IBD, including verifying eligibility and 51% ownership. There were 1,100 listings removed as a result of this review.

For me personally, it amplifies the fact that we need to do more diligence on the issue. There is no doubt about that. I was interested in the member's comment regarding a registry. I would like to think there is an obligation on all of us to look at ways to make sure there is more credibility and strength within to ensure procurements are being done in a proper fashion that all of us agree to.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I am pleased because we do not get to hear from him very often.

Privilege

The NDP suggested a GST holiday on basic necessities. Unfortunately, the Liberals' measure will last for only two months. We would have wanted it to be permanent. They also presented another measure: a \$250 cheque for workers, which could be a good thing, but seniors and retirees are excluded because they do not have any employment income.

I hope my colleague will work hard to resolve this problem and help the people and seniors who really need it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I want to remind the hon. member that that has very little to do with the subject of the motion and the hon. member's speech.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, working with the NDP has allowed the government, in many ways, to establish common policy initiatives that are helping Canadians and helping to get things done. The GST holiday on a number of different products during the holiday season is an excellent example of how we are able to get something tangible delivered. It is going to allow Canadians to be given a bit of a break during the holiday season. I see that as a very strong, powerful thing.

• (1635)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman said moments ago that the member for Calgary Nose Hill said that it did not happen. We have to read what she actually said in that story. She said she was not coerced and she left the campaign of Patrick Brown of her own volition, but that is not what we are talking about. We are not talking about why she chose to leave. We are talking about whether there was foreign interference.

The question is not why she resigned from the campaign. The question is whether a foreign diplomat specifically approached her. What does the parliamentary secretary have to contribute in terms of what he thinks that means?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is the reason the member for Calgary Nose Hill should go before the committee. The member is exactly right. It is whether someone was approached by a foreign diplomat or agent of another government in any fashion who made suggestions, which she seemed to have conveyed to more than one person who was prepared to potentially come forward. That is foreign interference. She should go before the committee.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, with respect to the concurrence report that we are debating today, will the member for Winnipeg North please apologize to all Canadians of indigenous ancestry for the horrible actions of the former cabinet minister, the member for Edmonton Centre?

Privilege

Second, will the member apologize to all the women he has silenced in the House of Commons by taking up all the time in Government Orders, year after year? Women in the Liberal Party are not allowed to speak, thanks to him. Will he apologize for his egregious actions?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will not apologize for a government that has been more feminist than any other government in the history of Canada, where we have seen 50%, and at times more, women around the cabinet table. I have no problem, in terms of recognizing the degree to which this government looks at things through a gender lens in dealing with issues such as the budget. I have no problem, in terms of comparing and contrasting the Conservatives' attitudes toward women with the attitudes of this government. It is quite the contrast, and I know many women within the caucus are more than happy to take on the Conservatives on this particular issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear our colleague say that some companies have been removed from the list of eligible businesses. However, why did it take scandals like Global Health Imports and ArriveCAN for the government to act?

I am going to ask him this: If indigenous people had been able to determine for themselves which companies qualified as indigenous businesses, could these scandals, which are shameful for the government, have been avoided? To ask the question is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member refers to issues that come before the government, and at times the government ministers need to take specific actions. There is a learning curve, depending on different types of situations, and where that has been afforded, ministers have in fact taken action.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Housing; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

• (1640)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, this will be an opportunity for me to talk about identity and, above all, cultural appropriation. I want to talk about identity as a collective commitment toward first nations in a context of reconciliation, evidently. I rise today to intervene on the 18th report, which was given to my colleagues by the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, on the matter of first nations, Red River Métis and Inuit identity theft. The committee shared it with my colleagues because this work should have been made a priority a long time ago. I am pleased to talk about it and to talk about the essential questions that need to be asked.

Identity is not just an abstract concept. It is an anchor. It ties us to our past, guides us in our present and lights the way to our future. It is not a right we can claim lightly, however. It is a promise that we make to our community, to our people and to those who will come after us. It is certainly not a privilege, as the federal government thinks it is, and, as I said, it is a fundamental right of a nation. What happens when that promise is broken? What happens when that identity is exploited, stolen or misused for personal or political gain? What happens when those who should be stewarding that identity, in other words, governments and institutions, fail to protect something that is sacred to so many communities?

Today, I am asking my colleagues to reflect on what it means to protect an identity, not only our own, but also that of our people. More importantly, I am asking them to reflect on the real economic, cultural and political consequences of identity appropriation. We need to make this issue a priority. The work that the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs did was essential, urgent and necessary. This work is not only a political responsibility; it is a moral imperative. We are being called upon to answer a vital question that has been ignored for too long: How can we guarantee the integrity of identity recognition processes while respecting the legitimate rights of first nations, Métis and Inuit people?

Several ministers have already been asked to speak on this issue, as have some public servants whose decisions must now be examined in light of subsequent events. Experts will also be summoned to enlighten the committee regarding the loopholes that enabled such abuse to happen and suggest possible solutions. It is time to stop dancing around the issue. The misappropriation of indigenous identities is not just a simple administrative error or an isolated incident. It is an injustice that undermines our reconciliation efforts and the communities' trust in institutions. By failing to take immediate action, we have allowed unacceptable situations to proliferate. It is high time that we addressed this issue with courage and determination.

We cannot disregard the recent events that have shaken the public's trust in our institutions. The matter involving the former minister and member for Edmonton Centre is a perfect example of the dangers inherent to identity appropriation and its impact on relations between the government and indigenous peoples. Wrongfully claiming indigenous identity to obtain benefits or privileges, as alleged in this matter, is not only a serious breach of ethics, but a betrayal of the true members of these communities. This scandal highlights the urgent need to review our identity recognition procedures, ensure full transparency in government practices, and restore trust in our institutions.

We have a duty to the first nations, Métis and Inuit to correct these injustices, to listen to their concerns and to protect their rights and their identity. The mistakes of the past must not be repeated, and the government must show leadership by implementing clear and fair mechanisms that will prevent this kind of abuse from happening again. People need an identity that uplifts them, not one that divides them. Identity is more than just a word or an idea. It is a history, a legacy and a duty. However, this history does not exist in isolation. It is intertwined with the history of the other peoples and communities who share our land and our values.

Take a recent example involving the Algonquins and Métis of Ontario. In 2017, the Ontario government gave harvesting rights to groups claiming to be Métis, without consulting the Algonquins, whose land was directly affected. The Government of Ontario even created an entity called Algonquins of Ontario, or AOO. The Ontario government uses it to avoid the real conversations it should be having with the Anishinabe on their land, the same unceded land we are on right now. Let us think about this: Algonquins, who have had a relationship with this land for thousands of years, are suddenly excluded from discussions about their own rights. This decision caused severe tension and undermined the trust between the indigenous communities and the institutions involved.

• (1645)

In 2023, the Ontario Court of Appeal sided with the Algonquins, the real ones, allowing them to sue the government. However, that victory came after years of struggle, frustration and loss that could have been avoided had the Algonquins been consulted from the start. This case illustrates the broader reality. Identities cannot be defined in the absence of recognition from the communities involved. Identities must be uplifting, not divisive.

There is a philosophy of recognition. Who we are is not a personal choice. It is not something we can adopt or advocate for because it seems beneficial or rewarding. It is based on a fundamental principle, and that is recognition. An identity must be recognized by those who truly carry it, by those who share its history and responsibilities. The Red River Métis, the Inuit, like the Algonquins, the Anishinabe and other first nations, have complex social and cultural networks, shared histories and governance systems that define who is part of their communities. They know better than anyone else who belongs to their communities. They know their members, their families, their alliances. When a person or a group claims an identity without being recognized by those communities, that poses a serious problem. It is not just about authenticity. It is also a matter of respect.

Consider the member for Edmonton Centre, a former federal cabinet minister. For years, he presented himself as Métis, claiming to be a non-status adopted Cree. His claims have been proven to be unfounded. This undermined his credibility and shattered public trust in our institution. This conduct by a minister raises ethical and moral questions. This type of claim harms more than just the person making the claim. It is far from being a personal mistake. It harms actual indigenous communities, which are being robbed of opportunities and resources, robbed of their stories and their legitimacy. Basically, stealing an identity is also stealing a voice.

Privilege

The real consequences of identity appropriation are not an abstract problem. They are real, measurable and often devastating for the communities involved. We are talking about the diversion of resources intended for indigenous communities. These include grants, programs and economic supports that, obviously, are limited. When individuals or groups falsely claim an identity, those resources are diverted.

Imagine a young Métis, Inuit or first nations artist whose project is rejected because some of the funding has been allocated to someone who does not actually belong to any of those communities. Imagine a family struggling to preserve its language or traditions but deprived of support because funds have been diverted to illegitimate projects.

That reinforces stereotypes. When an identity is misappropriated, it is often oversimplified. That feeds stereotypes that keep indigenous communities trapped in simplistic roles, such as the spiritual indigenous person, the marginalized indigenous person or, worse, the invisible indigenous person. Such stereotypes do not support these communities, far from it. They reinforce inequality and discrimination and can even lead to cultural erasure. One of the most insidious risks of identity appropriation is cultural homogenization. When everything ends up looking the same, the unique characteristics of each culture are erased. Every language that is forgotten, every ritual that is abandoned and every story that is not passed down is a loss for humanity as a whole.

Governments therefore have an implicit responsibility. All governments have a fundamental responsibility to protect the identities and rights of indigenous peoples. This responsibility cannot be taken lightly, because every decision a government makes or fails to make has profound impacts on social cohesion, justice and reconciliation. Governments must be vigilant, transparent and respectful to ensure that their decisions do not perpetuate past injustices. That requires clear, practical measures and systematic consultation. Every decision affecting indigenous rights or territories must be preceded by respectful, in-depth discussions with the nations affected. These consultations are not just an administrative exercise. They are an essential step for ensuring that the voices of first nations, Métis and Inuit people are at the heart of the decision-making process.

We need to establish clear criteria for recognition. Indigenous identities must be defined and recognized on the basis of solid historical evidence, authentic community ties and explicit validation by the nations concerned. Without such criteria, we risk diluting the integrity of indigenous identities and encouraging false claims.

• (1650)

Greater protection of resources is also required. Governments must ensure that funds and opportunities for indigenous communities are actually directed to their true beneficiaries. This includes preventing abuse that diverts resources away from their original purpose.

Privilege

When governments fail to fulfill these responsibilities, they fuel tensions, weaken legitimate claims and undermine reconciliation efforts. To do otherwise would not only betray the communities involved, but also undermine the public's trust in our institutions.

It is imperative that governments rise to these challenges and act decisively to build a society where every identity is valued and respected.

This leads us to reflect on our own identity. In Quebec, we have a long history of fighting to preserve our language, our culture and our rights. However, this fight must be fought with respect and humility. We cannot defend our identity while ignoring or downplaying the identity of others. The true strength of an identity, whether national or cultural, lies in its ability to coexist with others, to enrich and be enriched by different but complementary histories.

The identity of the Quebec nation has never been frozen in time. It evolves with the times, it is enriched by discourse and reinvents itself in the face of modern-day challenges. Today, we live in a Quebec where cultural diversity, the claims of indigenous peoples and the struggle for social justice are redefining what it means to be a Quebecker.

The legacy of the Patriots, with their quest for freedom, equality and sovereignty, is still an inspiration. However, we need to go further. The contemporary question of Quebec's identity cannot be addressed without fully including the first nations and Inuit. Their history is intimately entwined with our own, and their contribution to our collective culture is immeasurable. We will never forget the Métis of the Red River colony and the first premier of Manitoba, Louis David Riel. Quebeckers supported him until his last breath and carried on the duty to keep alive the collective memory we share with the Métis of Red River.

In this increasingly globalized world, protecting our language, culture and history must include a sincere openness to others with whom we share this land. Today, being a Quebecker means accepting the duality of preserving what makes us different while valuing the diversity that enriches our society.

We have a duty to build an identity that not only honours our past, but also reflects our collective aspirations. This identity includes, recognizes and celebrates the richness of its many components. It can help us carry the legacy of Quebec as a nation forward into today's world.

Ministerial responsibilities require courageous political action. To get back to the main topic, ministers play an essential role as political leaders in protecting identities, but also in correcting the mistakes of the past. This role extends beyond words and good intentions. It requires tangible, courageous action aimed at restoring equity and justice.

Let us consider Bill C-53, for example. It is unacceptable as drafted and must be withdrawn. If we continue with this bill, we will be perpetuating injustice and further weakening the legitimate claims of indigenous communities. Rejecting this bill, as Métis and first nations people are calling for, is more than a symbolic gesture. It is an essential political act that will show that we will not tolerate identity misappropriation.

In addition, it is imperative to recognize that the 2023 agreement signed with the Métis Nation of Ontario, or MNO, was illegitimate. It was built on fragile and contested foundations and has already created considerable tension with first nations and genuine Métis communities. The federal government must send a clear message. Talks should be broken off immediately.

The Métis National Council was once a representative body but no longer exists as a functional organization. The Manitoba Métis withdrew from the council in 2021, and the Saskatchewan Métis followed their example in the spring of 2024. More recently, last Friday, the British Columbia Métis also left the council, and the situation in Alberta is already on the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations' desk. Clearly, the council has become dysfunctional and can no longer serve as a legitimate representative.

This farce has gone on long enough. The ministers need to show leadership by terminating these agreements and re-establishing transparent and respectful dialogue with the true representatives of the communities. Without a doubt, the Minister of Indigenous Services, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency have central roles to play in reconciliation efforts. However, they need to be aware that this responsibility does not rest solely on their shoulders. We have reminded them time and time again that some issues exceed the scope of their mandate and require the involvement of their cabinet colleagues.

• (1655)

Reconciliation is not a task that can be compartmentalized. It requires a cross-cutting approach that spans across all departments and sectors. The Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs must ensure that justice and respect guide relations between law enforcement and indigenous communities. The Minister of Transport must take into account the realities of indigenous territories and work to open them up. The Minister of Canadian Heritage must recognize and support indigenous cultural initiatives to preserve and promote their languages, arts and stories. As for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, he has a duty to integrate indigenous perspectives into the policies for welcoming new immigrants, ensuring that newcomers understand and respect the history and rights of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. The list goes on. Each minister must actively contribute, in his or her own area, to this reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not just an election promise or a budget line. It is a collective effort that requires coherence, collaboration and unwavering political will. Everyone must play their part, for it is only by acting together that we can build a future based on mutual respect and justice. These decisions are not just about correcting policies. They are about taking responsibility, taking the kind of action that shows we are serious about protecting indigenous identities and peoples.

Privilege

In conclusion, it is time to build a shared and respected identity for the promise of a bright future. Today, we asked concerning and crucial questions for all indigenous nations. We looked at the challenges of identity protection and the injustices that are far too often ignored. We reiterated the responsibilities that governments, ministers and all of our institutions have to the first nations, Métis and Inuit. What we have done is reaffirm a promise not to avert our eyes, not to abandon legitimate voices and not to allow appropriation to continue to steal stories, resources and rights. Identity is a fundamental right, a right that is to be not only protected, but also respected and valued. That respect has to be at the heart of all of our actions because it is about our common future. I have invited the ministers to take courageous action on recognizing the identity of indigenous nations. We have the power to write a new page together, a page that honours the communities, respects the voices and gives each person the dignity they deserve. This work cannot wait any longer. It is time to act with determination and with an eye to upholding justice.

I would add that this case speaks to the urgent need to create a registry recognized by first nations. As I said in my speech, first nations need to be able to determine who the members of their community are. When an individual, a minister or otherwise, claims indigenous status to gain access to contracts, that does nothing to further economic reconciliation. They say that 5% of the value of federal contracts is awarded to first nations businesses. However, if that money is constantly being misappropriated by people who check a box on a form to gain access to those funds because, in their opinion, they deserve because they identify as indigenous, we have a real societal issue.

I would remind the House that the fundamental issue is reconciliation. In this context, economic reconciliation necessarily involves respecting the power of first nations to define who they are. I have some examples. I mentioned an entity known as the Algonquins of Ontario, which has endorsed projects like Chalk River. The Indigenous, Algonquin and Anishinabe people living around Chalk River unanimously oppose the project, however, along with 140 municipalities. The fact is that certain pretendians not recognized by indigenous peoples have said that they support this economic bill. We do not know what agreements were made. We do not even know who they are. They are just people who checked a box on a form saying they are indigenous. They appropriated an identity, and that is causing real problems in today's society, because first nations are having to go all the way to the Supreme Court to assert their rights. This has to stop.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is not very often that I would agree with many of the words from a member of the Bloc, but in this case I do. In fact I highlighted a very special event that took place in downtown Winnipeg, at Portage and Main, just this past weekend: The Red River Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Treaty was signed off. It is the first time a Métis government is actually being recognized through a treaty.

David Chartrand and his government have done a great favour to our entire nation by continuously advocating, for many, many

years, for the treaty. It pleases me that as a Government of Canada, after close to 150 years, we have achieved that. If we were to check with David Chartrand or any cabinet member, we would find clear, unanimous support that it is the Métis who define who the Métis are. I am wondering whether the member could provide his thoughts on the issue.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for speaking about this historic moment. I want to commend the leadership of the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, who did indeed recognize the leadership of the Red River Métis.

I have previously discussed several issues with President Chartrand. We have had some friendly, productive discussions. I apologize for not being able to attend last Saturday. I had family obligations. I was due for some time to catch up with my son. That said, the moment was obviously historic. Indeed, it is historic to recognize the true Métis, because it is so easy for a person to self-identify as Métis. This issue has been settled in Quebec. There are no Métis in Quebec, and that makes relations with indigenous communities much simpler. I invite Canada to think along these lines, and I congratulate the Red River Métis.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I had the privilege of sitting with my hon. colleague on the INAN committee during the revisions of Bill C-61. Today we are not here to talk about that; we are here to talk about, certainly, the member for Edmonton Centre and what is looking like identity fraud, and about the Conservatives' using the whole situation to look like they are friends of indigenous people, when they are the farthest from that.

I would say I am deeply troubled by some of the positions the Conservatives have taken, even around the crisis and the ongoing genocide of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, which the former prime minister, Harper, said was not even on his radar.

I find it a form of violence, the usurping of our identities, for political points. I am wondering what my honourable colleague thinks about that.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for her courage. She has been a member of the House for several years now and has always demanded respect for indigenous rights. Indigenous MPs can really move the debate forward. Truth is a prerequisite for reconciliation, and sometimes the truth needs to be shouted out in institutions like the House of Commons. The member for Winnipeg Centre serves as an example of this nearly every day.

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We certainly do need to stand up and denounce the injustice created by the member for Edmonton Centre when he misrepresented his own identity to gain access to contracts. It is outrageous. If I were him, I would be reconsidering not only my role as minister, but also the appropriateness of continuing to be paid by public funds to hold the noble office of member of Parliament.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am Métis. I am a citizen of British Columbia and I have roots in Alberta. Many of my relatives are Métis living in the Edmonton area. This hits close to home for me, but it is also a slap in the face that someone like the former Liberal minister would try to commit fraud. That does not in any way advance indigenous rights. I completely disagree with what the NDP member said, that the Conservatives are not interested in indigenous and Métis peoples. We want to see indigenous peoples, the Métis and the Inuit thrive.

Does my colleague not agree that indigenous peoples also need to thrive right across the country?

• (1705)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for speaking French with so much passion. I thank him for reaching out to the Bloc Québécois in these circumstances and for expressing his affection for first nations' members.

I would like to answer his question by giving an example. There is a difference between cultural appropriation, which we must speak out against as we are today, and cultural appreciation. When I went to Wendake, I visited Bastien Industries. Their owner, Jason, gave me a great lesson in this. We can appreciate elements that are indigenous as long as they are truly indigenous, but Jason raised a major issue. If he wants to sell his moccasins in the U.S., he has to provide his Indian status card. If he wants to sell his moccasins in Canada, they do not even ask for it. This means that anyone can sell moccasins, the Hudson's Bays of this world, without them actually being made by indigenous people. It is a major issue.

The recognition of who is indigenous and who is not should be respected, particularly in Canadian government contracts. These situations have been reviewed. The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Public Accounts of Canada and several other bodies are looking into this. Why? The reason is that the government is not verifying who is indigenous and who is not. At some point, we need to start doing that, and it is up to indigenous people to do those checks themselves in a way that respects their traditions.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—T miscamingue for his speech and for his perspective on this issue as a Quebecker.

In his speech, my colleague clearly explained the problem with people appropriating government programs to get funds when those funds could have been given to people who really need them. I am looking over the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on women's economic empowerment. Obviously, it is not easy for indigenous women and girls to go into business and become entrepreneurs, and they need access to programs.

I am trying to understand the situation. There are people who are appropriating funds using a false identity when those funds could be used to really help indigenous women and girls who have wonderful business ideas but who do not have enough money or support to carry them out.

Mr. S bastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, yes, we must speak out against situations where people get access to funding even though they are not indigenous or, in this case, not an indigenous woman.

My colleague and I attended an event held by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association. This association has created support programs for entrepreneurs and committees where young people and women get to participate in co-development, mentoring or coaching sessions. These are resources "by and for" indigenous people that work.

I urge the government to create more initiatives that invest in development funds "by and for" indigenous people. Resources like these help young entrepreneurs, women and indigenous people gain a deeper understanding of their trade and learn how to use indigenous knowledge to develop and market artisanal and other products that Quebec and Canadian consumers will love.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak to a critical topic related not just to this place but also to indigenous people right across the country. I want to mention the fact that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, who is very honourable. She is not only a champion for indigenous rights in this place but also a champion for indigenous people right across our planet.

We are prepared to discuss a topic presented to the indigenous and northern affairs committee related to the member for Edmonton Centre. The member for Edmonton Centre had falsely identified himself as indigenous, or at least misled individuals, in particular the Liberal Party of Canada, into believing this. For what purpose would one do this? Why would someone go through the process of undertaking identity fraud, identity theft, and taking from a people what is truly theirs and more? Actually, when I mentioned this story to my sister, she said something really interesting. She said, "Oh, great, someone wants to identify as indigenous. That is fantastic. They should also face the consequences we do." Wow, members can imagine how my sister, a visible woman of colour, was not able to overcome the serious barriers that were present to her as a young person when trying to enter into business or jobs, when trying to enter into a workplace where she was seen as a whole person. The contrast that we are seeing today has been extraordinarily exerted in the past few years. Buffy Sainte-Marie is an example of what is a really real and unfortunate circumstance facing Canadians. This example was a wake-up call to Canadians, to each and every one of us.

This kind of pervasive fraud is often not prosecuted, not investigated. This raises the question of why a person does it, as well as why we do not investigate it. Canada had 1,100 companies that were just deregistered; they have been delisted from the federal indigenous procurement registry, something that was mentioned by the indigenous services minister a few weeks ago. Wow, 1,100 companies were pre-approved as indigenous for the purpose of procurement in the Government of Canada's indigenous procurement strategy. It is shameful that we were unable to designate and delist those companies beforehand. This policy has been in place since the nineties. My God, what a failure it is of both Conservative and Liberal governments that they had no care or concern about this issue for as long as this policy has been in existence.

Worse yet, the Conservatives now cry wolf as if they were big stalwarts or big champions of indigenous rights, indigenous identity, when they were the government in charge at the time this program had been operating. The Liberals inherited this problem, and they kept it. It is a matter of convenience, a marriage of convenience perhaps. This has played out in Canada's history for the better part of 157 years, often to the detriment of indigenous people.

There are consequences to this kind of misbehaviour, these kinds of crimes. We have seen in Nunavut, for example, a sentence of three years in prison in a case where two young people had taken indigenous identity, Inuit identity, for the purposes of educational funding. It is shameful. Now we see, in this great, august chamber, individuals who are unable to tell us who they truly are; they stand very proudly and profess who they are, without any ability to understand that there are qualifiers to understanding that. There are frameworks.

There are actually even court cases in Canada that indigenous people had to overcome to even see their own people identified and recognized. *Regina v. Van der Peet*, for example, is a first nations Supreme Court case that delineated who was first nations for the purpose of commercial rights. Indigenous Métis people have had to, still today, since 2003, in the *Powley* case, decide who is indigenous. In those cases, the court was deciding. How shameful is it that the government was so unable to create a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with those it literally legislated for when it was part of their benefit? At the time of the Indian Act, for example, the government knew who was indigenous. It knew who was indigenous for the purposes of residential school or the sixties scoop. It knew who was indigenous when it came to paying out treaty breaches, massive breaches in the agreements made by our ancestors.

• (1710)

Government members knew who was indigenous then, but now, when they happen to be sitting in cabinet, all of a sudden, they do not. Holy smokes, they could not even ask the guy. They are going to put him in their indigenous caucus. They are going to label it as an indigenous caucus, and they will call it the "fantastic eleven". Today, we have questions about those individuals. We have questions about those who pose as indigenous for prestige, reputation or access to funding. The reason this is an important investigation to undertake is that the pain is felt deeply.

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I am sure some would argue, particularly the Liberals, that the real victim here is the member for Edmonton Centre. However, the real victims are indigenous people, indigenous businesses and indigenous communities. They have done the hard work of organizing their community, creating a benefit-impact study, talking to the community members, understanding what they can do as a community and creating employment, only to be met with a rigged system in Ottawa created by Liberals and Conservatives.

The Liberals and Conservatives like to talk a big game about how they are very different parties, but they have always benefited from being on the same side of the coin. When one does something bad, the other one is elected and then does the bad thing again. Always, over and over, this tradition exists in Canada. There are rights.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, a Liberal member says to join them. Who would join one of the most corrupt people ever elected in this country? These are the same people who legislated indigenous people having no water, and they are heckling an indigenous member now. That is how disturbed they are by their own record.

Now, with goodness and decency, the member for Winnipeg South is telling them, "We are going to lose on this, so we had better not talk about it." I appreciate that because it is true. The Liberals have no clue how to engage indigenous people, unless a court is telling them how to do it. That is a true fact. I beg my Liberal colleagues to look at that. Every single agreement comes through the narrow lens of the law. The government would rather debate who has rights in a matter of law, in a court of law, than to acknowledge that indigenous people are truly people who need recognition and rights in this place. That is the real shame of all this.

I have spoken to the government many times about this pervasive issue. The Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations admit that Canada's system is like this. They have to go to the courts, and then we will come to them; that is just the process. We have to prove to them that we have rights. No. I say Canada needs to prove to me that it has rights. It needs to prove to indigenous people why it thinks its laws are superficial to the indigenous natural law that exists in this place.

This is how far away we have come from the true necessary pieces of this discussion. We fail to see a nation-to-nation relationship when we always come at it from this domestic point of view, in which these nations lack the quality of sovereignty. They lack the quality of nationhood and of being able to assert self-determination for themselves. This kind of paternalism is sick, and it is over. This, today, is a warning. This discussion is a warning to pretendians everywhere. If they attempt to steal indigenous people's identity for the purpose of reputation or funding, we will find them. We will take from them everything they have sought to take from indigenous people.

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I say to indigenous people, who have suffered from these very obvious and long-standing cases of discrimination, that a better future is possible. A better future is near us. We have young people who are engaged in these systems right now; they are innovating, learning their language, coming back to the land and doing the hard work of reconnecting with who they really are. That is a blessing.

We have a great blessing just ahead of us. It is the generation to come right after me. Those young indigenous people are fierce. They are warriors; they are strong. I am so deeply proud of them. I cannot wait until they fill this chamber with their voices, with their stories, and bring true justice and true accountability to this country. We need to see that future. The future is promising. The future is with our indigenous youth; it will be one where who we are, our dignity and our stories are truly met. This beautiful planet will then have an opportunity to share with all of us the opportunities that I hope indigenous people will make present for everyone.

• (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to highlight something I highlighted earlier in the discussion, and that is the Red River Métis treaty. It is an agreement that was achieved and a historic event for the Manitoba Métis government. We are talking about well over 150 years.

Through the leadership of President Chartrand and his cabinet, and ongoing discussions with this government, we have the first-ever Métis treaty. I see that as a very strong positive. As for the many calls to action that the federal government is responsible for, well over 80% are well under way and many of them have actually been done. This is a government that has invested in and worked directly with indigenous communities across this country.

Could the member cite a government that has done as much as this government has in raising the profile of this important issue?

• (1720)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, the greatest governments to ever help indigenous people are our own people's governments. I have served my own people's government. I served as the national director for the Métis Settlements General Council.

The member cites a historic treaty that was just signed. In my speech, if he had listened, I said every single agreement that reaches a Liberal's desk is one that has been forced down their throat by the court. The MMF decision was one. People can open their phones, google it and look at it. It is the 2013 Supreme Court case of *Manitoba Métis Federation v. Canada*, citing Canada as in breach of the Manitoba Act, 1870, which my ancestors died for. They paid the ultimate price.

The member is now lecturing me, over 100 years later, as a descendant of those people, those brave men who died for that province. For him to then tell me it was not a court case, I challenge him to read the *MMF v. Canada* Supreme Court case.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is super disappointing. When the Liberal government got elected, it said the nation—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. Can we allow the hon. member who is trying to ask a question to be heard? Order.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton has the floor.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, it is super disappointing to see that the Liberal government, which said the nation-to-nation relationship was the most important priority, has not solved the boil water advisories. We see very little progress on the truth and reconciliation recommendations the Stephen Harper government recommended. We see hardly any action on murdered and missing aboriginal women. We now have criminal charges against ministers of the Crown and ministers of the Crown are misrepresenting things.

Can the member opposite comment on his disappointment in these events?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I am disappointed. I am disappointed by consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments that always use indigenous people as a gambling chip. Whether it is Conservatives today using indigenous people as a gambling chip to “own the libs” or the Liberals consistently neglecting their responsibility for indigenous people, both are immense travesties in this place.

When it comes to clean water, which the member mentioned, I want to correct the record on the history of clean water. The reason we are debating clean water legislation today is that the Conservative government of the past litigated in court and it was deemed inappropriate. It was deemed illegal. The Conservatives were attempting to take control over indigenous people's water and the court said no way. Now the Liberals are coming with another inferior piece of legislation that is almost identical to the Conservatives' piece of legislation. That is the problem that exists when it comes to clean water.

When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we witnessed the largest indigenous protest in Canada's history, called Idle No More, to kick Stephen Harper to the curb. Indigenous people did that. We stood on our rights. We stood on the shoulders of giants who led the way, our ancestors in particular. That will never allow us to see dignity or pride ever again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for his speech and for the energy he invests in fighting for these issues. Unfortunately, a number of House of Commons committees have had to study issues involving indigenous funding and identity theft.

Why do I say unfortunately? I say it because these problems are recurrent. They have been examined by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, where the member has been especially active.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on the general problem of identity theft, given that contracts intended for genuine indigenous people have been awarded to the wrong people.

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, there are three requirements under law in this country that must be observed in the application, support or benefit. It is a three-point test. I will make it easy for everybody. I cannot do it in slogan format for my Conservative colleagues, but I will try my best.

One, someone must self-identify as an indigenous person. I, the member for Edmonton Griesbach, identifies as Métis. A person needs to pass a second test, which is that they must have a historical connection to that community. My ancestors, and we have a big fancy sheet that shows where we are from, have a historical connection to that same nation. The third test, which very few people can pass, is that the modern iteration of that community accepts them. I am from the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, and that Métis settlement accepts me as a member. Those three qualifiers together, under the Supreme Court of Canada decision known as Powley, give that ability to understand.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have to say I am not pleased to rise today to participate in a debate on a concurrence motion about the member for Edmonton Centre usurping, appropriating, indigenous identity for financial benefit.

What has been most disturbing is that, while my good colleague, an expert on Métis rights, stood here just now talking about Métis rights, the member for Kingston and the Islands felt it appropriate to heckle him. It is the height of white supremacy, which we regularly see in the House, and I can say that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I almost feel as though this is to entice a reaction out of me. I did not heckle anybody. The member from Winnipeg and I were just having a conversation. I did not even raise my voice.

An hon. member: Debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, that may be debate or a clarification, but we will let the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre pursue her speech.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands, again, when we are talking about the usurping of indigenous voices and identity, what does he do? He decides to do a point of order when an indigenous woman is talking, which is the height, again, of white supremacy.

Then the member for Winnipeg North, the Liberal from Winnipeg North—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am concerned that the member is trying to intentionally label members of the government. She stands up on many points of order to interrupt other indi-

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viduals. To try to give any sort of false impression that this is something that is anti-indigenous is just wrong and unethical.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Hamilton Centre is rising on the same point of order.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): However, hon. members will allow the Chair to speak.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, I do appreciate that. If they are going to keep standing up to interrupt the member, I would at least ask that they cite the point of order they are raising and apply relevance to their point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Actually, that is a rule that applies to everyone. Before asking for a point of order, it is important to mention which standing order the member is referring to.

To the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, it would perhaps be good not to accuse other members of being what the hon. member was accusing them of.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I am going to go back to my point that the member did not allow me to finish. Then, the member for Winnipeg North, instead of learning from an expert, a descendant of the Red River Métis, heckled him during his response when he could have taken the time of reconciliation and truth to learn; it is shameful. At a time when the Liberal Party members should be standing in solidarity, if they are really serious about reconciliation to protect indigenous people from the stealing of our identities, it is unfortunate that they double down and heckle. They are not going to take away my voice.

What has occurred is disgusting for a number of reasons. This member has used indigenous identity potentially for financial gain. The sad part about people like him, like Buffy Sainte-Marie, like the many academics who have received scholarships, grants and bursaries using our identity to get millions of dollars in research grants, is that they financially benefit, but they do not have to deal with the kinds of things that we do as indigenous people. We have to deal with the intergenerational impacts of residential school. We have an ongoing genocide against indigenous women and girls so severe in the Winnipeg that I fear for the safety of my nieces taking taxi cabs there. In the midst of this debate, when the Liberals have an opportunity to give space to indigenous voices, they disrespect that.

However, it is not just the Liberals. For weeks and weeks, I have had to listen to the Conservatives also usurp indigenous identities for political gain. It is disgusting, and I will tell members why this is so grotesque.

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In a Conservative government, Prime Minister Harper said that murdered and missing indigenous women and girls was not on his “radar”. It was the current member for Carleton who said to residential school survivors when settlement agreements were being reached that they did not need the money, they needed to learn the “values of hard work”, like being a slave in the residential schools doing tasks every day was not hard work and being taken away from their families. However, he then fundraised with residential school denialist think tanks and lifted up his friend, Jordan Peterson, a misogynist, a transphobic and a residential school denialist, as protecting, in public, time and time again, freedom of speech. Well, we have laws in this country; we have the Criminal Code. Inciting hate is inciting hate, which has nothing to do with free speech.

Time and time again, the leader of the Conservative Party has fraternized and even fundraised with folks like Frontier Centre, a residential school denial think tank, for the Conservative Party of Canada. He was fundraising with Frontier Centre when he came to Winnipeg when we had just discovered the tragic news that potentially there were women in the Prairie Green Road landfill; women who we are currently looking for. However, he did not go to see the families. No, he decided instead to fundraise with residential denial think tanks.

● (1730)

The member for Saskatoon West likened indigenous people to criminality, saying that the person in question was more likely to offend because of his racial background, and then doctored Hansard to suit his political benefit. I get kind of sick and tired as a representative from a place that has been likened to ground zero for MMIWG, and when I come from a family that has had to deal with the intergenerational effects of child welfare systems and institutionalization, to hear Conservatives, people who have voted unanimously time and time again against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, showing deep concern for the latest identity fraud by the Liberals.

There was a point of order when I had not even started talking. It reeks here of appropriating indigenous identities for personal benefit and gain, whether it is the Liberals and members trying to get loans, or the Conservatives' utilizing our trauma and our historical experiences so they can hold up the House forever on our backs. I wish they had fought so hard for residential school survivors. I wish they had fought so hard to get supports for the families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. I wish they had fought so hard for our land, territories and resources, not when it suited their economic and political interests but to uphold our human rights, which they have voted against time and time again in the House. They voted against Bill C-15.

If we are going to get to the bottom of the matter, if we are going to reconcile in this country, then people need to do some inner reflection, like the members who felt it necessary to heckle me and like the Conservatives and members of the Liberal Party whom I have had to listen to time and time again call us “our indigenous people”, as if somehow we are pets in this place.

Let us do some reconciling here. Let us tell some truth bombs about the level of baloney and racism on the backs of indigenous

people that I, my other indigenous colleagues, and our family members and communities have to endure. It is political drivel. If we want to reconcile, we need some answers today and we need the behaviour to stop.

● (1735)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre deserves all our respect and our deep appreciation for her championing and for her work on behalf of indigenous women and girls, yes, but I would also say for marginalized people, class struggle and the recognition that we are in an unfair society at many levels. I wanted to speak my deep gratitude and to ask her this: What can those of us who are settler culture MPs do to be better allies?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things I have struggled with is this. I have to say that I am really proud to be part of the NDP, which has respected my voice as an indigenous person, understanding that maybe sometimes my voice might be different. I have a deep respect from our leader and my colleagues, who have supported us and who understand that human rights are human rights, not just when it suits our political and economic interests.

Human rights for indigenous people are up for debate every day in the House, whether it is the ability to make racist statements and doctor Hansard or to vote against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I think a good first step we can make as legislators is to uphold the rule of law.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a Métis citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia and Golden Ears Métis Society, I must admit that what the former Liberal minister has done has really undermined indigenous people throughout Canada. It is a shame because, as was mentioned by a previous speaker, 1,100 companies that identified as indigenous were delisted, so we see the amount of fraud for economic, social and political gains as being very harmful, and we are seeing that right across the board. I know that there was one lady, a former judge, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. She was highly respected and yet it came across that she was also just using indigenous identity to advance herself.

I wonder if the member would agree with me just how much this issue has hurt the indigenous people.

• (1740)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, what has happened with the member for Edmonton Centre is disgusting, but what is equally disgusting for me is the way the Conservatives are also hijacking indigeneity and indigenous identity for political gain. I know this for all the reasons I cited. The Conservatives were against the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. They are voting against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the current leader is fundraising with residential school denialists and buddying up with Jordan Peterson, who is also a residential school denialist—

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take this as an attack upon me personally. My family attended residential schools and, as a Conservative—

The Deputy Speaker: That is debate. We will go on.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. member for Shefford has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I serve together on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and we have had the opportunity to work together for some time now.

I will try to be brief. What bothers me today is that all these false indigenous identity claims are being used to obtain funds that could be going toward reconciliation efforts and nation-to-nation dialogue.

As my colleague knows, study after study at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women confirms the need for programs to support indigenous communities, particularly to help indigenous women who are disproportionately affected by resource development in western Canada. My colleague is well aware of this, because she was the one who proposed this study to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We also need red dress alert programs. Funding is also needed to promote the economic empowerment of indigenous women and girls and to implement the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

I would like my colleague to comment further on the problem of funding.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has been a tremendous ally who shows the kind of support I have had on the status of women committee and from women in the House of Commons who have worked across party lines. I would like to commend my hon. colleague for her support, especially for things such as the red dress alert and the connection between increased violence against indigenous women and girls around resource-extraction projects. I would like to thank my colleague for that support.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. I know that he has some prepared remarks on this particular subject.

Privilege

I am going to spend a little time talking about why I think we are debating this today. It is important, just to bring everybody back to the same place, to read exactly what we are debating. This is a concurrence motion, a motion that came from the committee and that the Conservatives have tabled today. The motion reads:

That the committee report to the House that the MP for Edmonton Centre appear before the committee for two hours independently by Friday, December 6, 2024, immediately following the completion and reporting back of C-61 to the House, and that the report is tabled by the Chair in the House as soon as possible and no later than Monday, November 25, 2024.

The Conservatives then further amended this to say that it would return from committee by January 27.

That is what we are debating. That is what three hours of House time has been seized with, to debate whether or not the former minister, the member for Edmonton Centre, should go and appear before committee on this particular day for this allotted amount of time and have it be reported back to the House.

That is what the Conservatives chose to do. The reason I bring this up is that, like so many times throughout this fall session when we have debated these issues, specifically these procedural tactics, Conservatives are doing this time and time again. I find it very discouraging, because there are so many other things that we could be talking about and so many other issues that we could be discussing. Instead, we revert back to the Conservative go-to of character assassination and trying to drag people through the mud. That is the only way this Conservative Party feels as though it can ever get elected, not to present its ideas to Canadians but rather to, repeatedly and ad nauseam, try to create and inflict maximum personal damage on individual reputations.

It does not even have to be an elected official. The Conservatives will stop at nothing. They will go after renowned Canadians, as we saw last spring. They will go after just about anybody that they think they can get a little political gain out of. That is what we are seeing today, again.

The member for Edmonton Centre, who was a minister, stepped back. He defended himself and said that the allegations against him were not true. He stepped back and said that he wanted to clear his name, wanted to take time to do that and would step back from the ministry in the meantime. That is exactly what he did.

However, it was not enough. It is an honourable way to approach this, but that was not enough for Conservatives. They need to absolutely go after this until they have drawn as much blood out of this situation as possible. I find it so discouraging, and I believe that the majority of Canadians do too. We have to ask ourselves, “What do they not want to be talking about?”

Some fairly substantial bombshell allegations have been dropped recently. The member for Calgary Nose Hill is being implicated in a recent CBC story about having been pressured by foreign diplomats to abandon Patrick Brown's leadership campaign in a leadership race that eventually elected the current Leader of the Opposition to that position. Here is something even more remarkable. Not that long ago, the member for Calgary Nose Hill was in a committee room, she was approached by the media and she jumped up and ran out. There is a video of it all over the Internet right now. She jumped up and ran out.

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By the way, this is the member who, not too long ago, referred to herself, and I have to find it here in the story, as a seasoned politician and a seasoned communicator. That is what she said. Those were her words. However, she could not handle the heat of the media coming up to her in a committee room. She got up and she ran out of the committee room. When I see something like that, the first thing I think of is that somebody is trying to hide something.

• (1745)

The member made some comments that are in the story. She said she left the Patrick Brown campaign of her “own volition”; she was not pressured. She is “an experienced politician, [a] seasoned communicator”, and she knows how to handle herself. She certainly does, because she handled herself very well in that comment alone. She skated right by the main issue.

The issue is not whether or not the member for Calgary Nose Hill changed her mind as a result of a conversation. The issue is not even, believe it or not, whether or not she was coerced by a foreign diplomat. That is not the issue either. The actual issue, and what she completely neglects to say because of her incredible communication skills that she rightly points out she has, is that she neglected—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake is rising on a point of order.

• (1750)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, while I understand and appreciate that there is a decent amount of latitude given to us here in the chamber, what the member is talking about is not the issue at hand, about the member for Edmonton Centre and his egregious claims of indigenous identity to try to get government contracts. Therefore I believe this is a call on relevance.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the input.

I will caution the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands to tie it back in as best he can to the topic at hand.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I will be coming back to it in a moment, but I cannot say I am surprised that a Conservative would try to silence me when I am making the comments.

The issue is not whether or not the member for Calgary Nose Hill was influenced, or whether or not she was able to stand up. The issue—

The Deputy Speaker: There is another point of order by the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are here to discuss the member for Edmonton Centre and a concurrence motion that was moved by the INAN committee with respect to him. I know that the member for Kingston and the Islands would like to talk about anything else, as he always does, but it is not relevant to the debate at hand.

The Deputy Speaker: As I said previously, I will ask the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands to tie it back in quickly.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I tried to, but I was given only 10 seconds before I was shut down again by a Conservative.

The issue is that the member for Calgary Nose Hill has neglected to inform us whether or not she was approached by a foreign diplomat. That is foreign interference. That, not what the end result of it was, is what the Canadian public deserves to know.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, it was far more than 10 seconds. I am trying to give the member some time, but he refuses to bring his speech back to the debate at hand.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member needs to be a little patient. Let me explain why.

The motion that the Conservatives have amended calls for the member for Edmonton Centre to go before a standing committee. If the member is patient enough, she will hear that there is merit for the member for Calgary Nose Hill to also go before a committee. We can draw the comparison. The member's speech is absolutely relevant in terms of drawing that comparison. She might not like the comparison—

The Deputy Speaker: That is descending into debate.

I will say again that relevance is important in the chamber, that we want to be talking about the issue at hand, which is of course the report, but ultimately I know that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands will at least say three words to connect it, just as the parliamentary secretary just did.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I will do that right now. I did start my speech by talking about exactly what this report said. I read out the report. To the parliamentary secretary's point, as he kind of gave away where I was going with this, this is exactly it. This is a committee report that is calling for a minister to appear before a committee.

An hon. member: A former minister.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that correction: a former minister. We cannot even seem to get members of the House who potentially have information to go before committee. My point is, as it relates to this report, that there is this double standard that Conservatives seem to be placing. On the one hand, they are saying we absolutely need to get this minister appearing before committee. That is what this whole report is about. I apologize to my colleague from the Conservatives if she feels I am not staying on topic. This is literally just two sentences that we are debating. That is what this is.

We are debating whether the minister should be dragged before committee. We just had to drag Patrick Brown to the public safety committee; he has to be there before December 10. All I am saying is maybe that should be extended to the member for Calgary Nose Hill, too, because she seems to have some information that I would bet the committee wants to get down to. I am sure my colleagues from the Conservatives are equally concerned about the member for Calgary Nose Hill, as they are in this motion they tabled today in the House.

I end with where I started: I believe this is nothing more than an attempt by Conservatives to drag people who have already stated their position and admitted they are going to remove themselves from the position they are in, in order to clear their name. We have to let that process unfold. I am content with how it has been dealt with.

I feel there is an opportunity for the former minister to provide his position on what has transpired. Then, I believe, is the best time for everyone to judge him.

• (1755)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they cannot stand the truth. They could not handle it. That is why we have been in a state of limbo and there has been no government legislation debated in the House for weeks.

It is because they, their Prime Minister and their party, refuse the order of the majority of members in the chamber. The member tries to deflect the fault to this side of the House, when it is that side of the House that has been consistently found to be refuting the House's order. With the continued cover-up of corruption, whether it was the SNC-Lavalin scandal years ago, which saw the dismissal of an honoured member, or as it continues today, on and on, he continues to try to deflect. Why?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member almost executed that as well as Jack Nicholson did in *A Few Good Men*, but not quite. I thank the member for at least admitting that this concurrence motion is nothing more than trying to prolong the filibuster they are doing on the former motion we have been dealing with for months. He said that. He just said that in his comments. What he said is they are doing this because they are trying to hold the government to account for X, Y and Z, and he mentioned nothing about this report. All I can say is to thank him.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member across the way is putting words in my colleague from B.C.'s mouth here—

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into the debate we are having. Maybe if we get another round, I will let the hon. member for Brandon—Souris ask a question.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. I have one question. Does he condone the actions of his Liberal colleague from Edmonton Centre?

Does he believe that his colleague did the right thing? Does he believe that he should face no consequences for claiming to be indigenous when he is not? I would like him to comment on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, what I said in my speech, if the member was listening, was that the member for Edmonton Centre has defended himself, said that what he is being accused of is not true and removed himself from cabinet in order to defend his reputation and clear his name. Rather than jump to judgment, which my friend across the way wants, I would rather wait until he has the opportunity to do that and see how it comes out. Then we can decide whether we want to tar and feather him.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, early in the post-election of 2015 and again in 2019, the Liberal Party published a document claiming it had 11 indigenous MPs. Included was the former minister of employment and social development, the member for Edmonton Centre.

Privilege

Why does the member think the Liberals did that?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, for the same reason all political parties will identify various different people with various different backgrounds, I think that is why it was done. I guess the issue at heart here is whether, and this is what I am reading between the lines, the member for Edmonton Centre was in error by doing that and should not have done that. That is what I am hearing and that is what is out there.

All I am saying is that he says that was not the case. He wants to clear his name and has stepped back from some of his responsibilities in order to do that. Why not give him the opportunity to try that? If it then comes out that he was being egregious in his statements, then hold him to account at that point. Why the rush to judgment right now?

• (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague can talk about the two systems the Conservatives have, for example, what they do with Liberals versus the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, this was the amazing thing we saw earlier today with the question from the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. We could not have seen a double standard on display better than in that question. He basically said, “Hold on. She said that she did not do it. We need to believe her.” Meanwhile, when the member for Edmonton Centre says that he is being misrepresented, everybody jumps on top of him. Why not apply the same standard to everybody? The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman showed exactly how he cannot do that.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want first to recognize that we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I would like to acknowledge the valuable work the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs has carried out by examining the infrastructure deficit confronting many indigenous communities. The report prepared by the committee, titled “A Path to Growth: Investing in the North”, provides important insights into the challenges facing infrastructure development and maintenance in the north and helpfully recommends potential solutions for them. The report will help to inform policy and program decisions going forward. Common themes from the report are core to how we are proactively addressing challenges in partnership with indigenous peoples. Following their lead, we are working to remove systemic barriers to economic development and to advance indigenous economic self-determination.

Privilege

However, before outlining some of the many ways we are making progress, I must respond to misleading statements being made in today's debate and set the record straight. As members of government have repeatedly made clear, Global Health Imports was never listed on the indigenous business directory. Consequently, the company has not ever been part of the government's procurement program for indigenous businesses, nor was it awarded any contracts through the procurement strategy for indigenous businesses.

Instead, I want to bring the focus back to tangible activities that are producing real results in the lives and for the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Together with indigenous leaders, indigenous business and the broader sector, we are working to advance economic reconciliation. On this note, this past year Indigenous Services Canada convened two economic reconciliation round tables, which were attended by leaders from national indigenous organizations and national indigenous economic institutions, senior executives from Canada's financial sector, federal ministers, and senior federal officials. Indigenous peoples are leading the way to advance economic reconciliation, and what this level of engagement at the round tables demonstrates is that economic reconciliation is not a conversation limited to government. There are also commitments and buy-in from the financial sector to advance common goals.

By supporting self-determined economic priorities and collaborating with leading economic thinkers across Canada, we will continue to drive toward concrete actions and concrete solutions that will make a difference in the everyday lives of first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

The round tables have advanced a common understanding of how public and private sector actions can help to remove access to capital barriers. Participants brought forward ideas for how greater access to risk capital could help to finance infrastructure gaps, while also exploring ways the financial sector can continue to adapt and develop expertise to best serve indigenous communities in navigating complex land and financing questions. It is clear that relevant and topical data on indigenous economies is essential to supporting community-level investment decisions.

We are looking at opportunities for collaboration between indigenous institutions and financial and statistical experts to address data gaps through the publishing of indigenous economic outlooks. Partners are challenging us to reimagine how to develop these outlooks with opportunities to blend traditional economic indicators with qualitative data and narrative storytelling. A common theme across these conversations is the leading roles indigenous peoples must play in defining the challenges and solutions that will support their economic priorities. There are many opportunities to support exciting indigenous visions.

This is not the only way we are advancing economic reconciliation. Various economic development programs have been designed to support improved economic outcomes. For example, the aboriginal entrepreneurship program, the AEP, provides access to capital and access to business opportunities to indigenous entrepreneurs and business owners in Canada. This program seeks to increase the number of viable businesses in Canada that are owned and controlled by indigenous people, and it funds a broad range of entrepreneurial pursuits. It also aims to build capacity, reduce barriers and increase access to capital by forging partnerships that will in-

crease economic opportunities for first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

• (1805)

Over the past 35 years, the program has distributed roughly 52,000 business loans worth \$3.2 billion through its access to capital stream. These loans, I might add, have a repayment rate of over 95%. Consider that for every \$1 million lent by indigenous financial institutions through the access to capital stream, \$3.6 million is produced in total gross domestic product for Canada. That is an impressive return on investment.

Most beneficial is that an evaluation of the indigenous entrepreneurship and business development program over the period 2015-16 to 2020-21 found it is advancing indigenous self-determination by removing barriers to business capital and supports. Equally important is that it is sustaining the network of indigenous lending institutions, creating and expanding indigenous businesses and creating or maintaining jobs through lending.

That is not the only example of economic reconciliation in action. The aboriginal entrepreneurship program, which I just talked about, is actually led by and delivered through the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, or NACCA, and the Métis capital corporations. It is highly significant that a program put in place to enable first nations, Inuit and Métis business owners to launch or grow their businesses is also led by strong indigenous leaders.

The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association and the Métis capital corporations administer about \$25 million per year of equity capital, provided by the Government of Canada, to enable indigenous entrepreneurs to obtain affordable commercial loans. This indigenous-led program shows what success looks like when indigenous peoples are supported and empowered to independently deliver services.

The aboriginal entrepreneurship program also supports the \$150-million indigenous growth fund. This indigenous-led and -designed fund is providing indigenous businesses with a fully independent source of capital.

The procurement strategy for indigenous businesses I mentioned earlier is another initiative producing positive economic results for indigenous people. It facilitates access to federal procurement opportunities so that indigenous businesses can win contracts, generate revenue and gain experience that, in turn, can assist them in winning larger future contracts within both the public and private sectors. What we have heard from indigenous leaders is that they want the procurement strategy for indigenous businesses to stay. It continues to evolve and adapt to changing needs and fiscal realities, in large part because we are listening to indigenous leaders and businesses.

The resulting feedback from procurement round tables held with indigenous leaders since 2018 led directly to improvements to the strategy, which is why our relationships with indigenous partners are so important. Our programs, policies and services must apply indigenous insights, lessons learned and expertise, and that is exactly what we are doing.

These efforts have accelerated since 2021, when we began to co-develop a transformative indigenous procurement strategy with indigenous partners. The five-year process is currently under way, and these reforms will improve existing indigenous procurement policies and programs. Furthermore, they will help ensure benefits intended for indigenous peoples go to indigenous peoples.

An important part of this collaborative work includes determining a path forward to transferring the administration of the indigenous business directory to indigenous partners. One key message delivered by partners in our co-development discussions is that first nations, Inuit and Métis are best positioned to define and verify indigenous businesses.

Indigenous Services Canada is committed to working with partners, including the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association and the Canadian Council for Indigenous Business to transfer the verification of indigenous businesses to indigenous partners.

We know economic opportunities for indigenous businesses were removed or blocked through years of colonial policies and practices. The concrete actions taken by the Government of Canada, in co-operation and partnership with indigenous leaders and businesses, must continue. We need the valuable insights and expertise of first nations, Métis and Inuit leaders. We need continued opportunities for meaningful dialogue, and we need reports like “A Path to Growth: Investing in the North” that shine a light on the work ahead.

It is economic reconciliation in action when we collaborate on efforts to support and empower indigenous people to fully and equitably participate, whether as small business owners or leaders of major projects in the economy.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals seem to be telling us that there is no need to get all worked up, but we are talking about indigenous identity theft. There is a problem when indigenous people themselves are

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telling Liberal MPs that they do not recognize them as indigenous. A similar situation came up last year with the member for Nickel Belt.

I am anxious to see what will happen. Does the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam agree that the member for Edmonton Centre needs to appear before the committee as soon as possible, answer parliamentarians' questions, take responsibility for using public funds inefficiently, and take accountability?

[*English*]

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member for Edmonton Centre speak on the matter. He has assured me that there is no wrongdoing behind what has gone forward. There has been some confusion in his family history; he is sorting that out, and I have full confidence in him to do the right thing and to clear his name as we go forward.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, honestly, I cannot believe what the member has said. There are still boil water advisories, even though the government said that the nation-to-nation relationship was the most important one. There has been very little action on truth and reconciliation, and no action to speak of on murdered and missing indigenous women. Is the member not embarrassed that a minister of the Crown had to step down under allegations that he misrepresented his indigenous heritage?

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the member for Edmonton Centre is not responsible for allegations that amount mainly to innuendo and smear against him.

In regard to water advisories, we committed to getting rid of almost all of them by 2021, and we did get rid of almost all of them by 2021. However, it is an ongoing issue that we work continuously with the various first nations communities to resolve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the objective of awarding 5% of federal contracts to businesses owned by first nations is obviously commendable from the perspective of reconciliation. However, we realized that 1,100 businesses had been delisted because the Liberal government had done a poor job of designing the list, but also because people are trying to defraud the system and misappropriate funds when they do not represent first nations-owned businesses. The example comes from high up, since a former Liberal minister, the member for Edmonton Centre, is at the centre of a controversy because he falsely claimed that he and his business were indigenous in order to get federal contracts from his own government.

Does my colleague not think that is totally outrageous?

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• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I object to the characterization of the member as a pretender. As I mentioned in my speech, the member for Edmonton Centre's company received no funding through any indigenous stream whatsoever. He is a man of honour with a good reputation, and I have full confidence that he will be able to restore his reputation as we go forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether the member shares the same concern that I have in regard to how the Conservative Party is bringing forward concurrence motions as a way to filibuster so we are not debating other issues that are of critical importance for all Canadians. The Conservatives always want a report to go back to committee, and they give specific instruction to the committee. We are seeing more and more of that. My concern is that standing committees should be able to determine who comes before the committee for testimony.

Does the member have any concerns in terms of how much of a control freak the the leader of the Conservative Party is and how much control he wants to have over standing committees?

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that these motions are a matter of an extended filibuster.

I believe that the standing committees ought to maintain control of their own business. This is an end run around the notion that we cannot compel members to appear. I think it is incontestable that this is a matter of slowing down the House so the Conservatives can claim it is broken.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Edmonton Centre has a lot to answer for, notwithstanding the fact that he recently resigned from cabinet in disgrace.

Among the serious matters that the member must answer for and be held accountable for is the fact that his shady, pandemic-profiteering PPE company falsely held itself out to be a wholly owned indigenous company when it applied for two federal government contracts. It was a blatant attempt to give the company's bids a leg-up in the government's procurement selection process. In other words, it was an attempt to steal government contracts from legitimately owned indigenous businesses. It is about as low as it gets. It is cultural appropriation in one of its most offensive forms. Do members know what else it is? It is outright fraud.

The Prime Minister knew about the fact that the minister's company had falsely represented itself in this way, and for days the Prime Minister stood behind the minister. He kept him in his cabinet. It was only when the Edmonton police officially announced that a criminal investigation had been launched into the member's company that he finally resigned from cabinet.

I have to say that, as bad as it was to stand behind the minister for days, the Prime Minister has stood behind the member for months, despite the fact that he faced a cloud of corruption. It is a cloud of corruption that involved the fact that he almost certainly violated the Conflict of Interest Act while he was involved in the

operations of the shady PPE company while he sat in cabinet. That is a situation where the member broke the law. Text messages reveal that a Randy was involved in the operations, in a half-a-million-dollar shakedown, and no one can identify that Randy other than as the member for Edmonton Centre. However, that did not stop the Prime Minister from standing by the member.

Likewise, the member's company had been ordered by Alberta courts to pay back clients \$8 million for ripping them off and faces not less than seven lawsuits alleging fraud. That was not enough to kick him out of cabinet, nor was the fact that the minister falsely held his company as being wholly indigenous-owned when applying for two government contracts.

A normal prime minister, in fact, any other prime minister, would have long said to the member for Edmonton Centre that he was fired from cabinet. However, we do not have a normal prime minister. This is a prime minister who has presided over a culture of corruption and conflict that goes right to the top, right to the Prime Minister himself.

I have to ask if the Prime Minister's reluctance to fire the member for Edmonton Centre related to the fact that he has been found guilty, not once but twice, of none other than breaking the Conflict of Interest Act.

Also, could his reluctance have something to do with the fact that he is, like the member for Edmonton Centre, a cultural appropriator? The Prime Minister has worn blackface more times than he can recall and has repeatedly worn highly inappropriate and culturally insensitive costumes, including while serving as Prime Minister.

Could it be that he was reluctant to fire the member for Edmonton Centre for such things as breaking the Conflict of Interest Act and being a cultural appropriator because, by that standard, not only would he have to fire the member, but he would also have to fire himself? I would submit that a strong inference in the affirmative can be drawn in that regard.

• (1820)

With respect to the member for Edmonton Centre and the fact that his company falsely represented itself as being wholly indigenous owned, the member's excuse is that he had no idea. It was all the fault of his business partner, Anderson. I will observe that the member for Edmonton Centre has repeatedly and disturbingly held himself to be indigenous. This is a member who once said he was Métis; he then said he was non-status adopted Cree. He then said he was not indigenous at all but an ally of indigenous peoples, and now I believe he is purporting, again, to be Métis. Maybe he is not.

It is tough to keep track, given all the representations over the years that the member for Edmonton Centre has made about his indigenous status, which he, in fact, does not have. I also have to observe that I have listened to the member make those representations. I can remember when he sat over there between 2015 and 2019. I heard him make those types of representations enough times that I simply assumed he had indigenous ancestry of some sort as one aspect of his background.

For the member to say now that he had no idea does not bear any credibility. I would submit that it is part of a pattern. This is a member who constantly says, very conveniently, that he has no idea. He had no idea that his company falsely represented itself to be indigenous owned, just as he had no idea that his company was connected to a cocaine trafficker. He had no idea about the text messages from Randy to his business partner, who was implicated in a half-a-million dollar fraud, or the arson at the company's warehouse. On and on it goes.

The minister's contention that he had no idea about the fact that his company tried to steal government contracts from legitimately owned indigenous businesses has zero credibility. Further, I would observe that the minister, at the time these bids and these false representations were made, was not just anyone at the company; he was one of two partners, and he was involved in the operations of the company on a day-to-day basis.

This was, after all, before the member returned and was appointed to cabinet after the 2021 election. As I noted, it seems very likely that, notwithstanding that he ought not to have been, the member continued to be involved in the operations of the business, including potentially involving himself in matters of fraud while he sat in cabinet.

It is imperative that the minister come before committee to answer questions. The day he resigned from cabinet happened to be the very day he was scheduled to appear before the ethics committee. I have to say I find it highly suspicious that the member resigned from cabinet on that day.

• (1825)

The member has been less than transparent when he has come before committee. When he first appeared before committee, when there were allegations surrounding these text messages of a Randy, he claimed, and he had the committee believe, that he had nothing to do with the company, nothing to do with the operations and nothing to do with communicating with Anderson. This was until further text messages revealed that this Randy was in Vancouver at the very same time the former minister was in Vancouver. He then came back to committee and said, "Oh, actually, I did talk to my business partner, Anderson. Oops, I forgot to mention it." This was not just an omission. It was a material omission that amounted to misleading the committee.

The member for Edmonton Centre better not hide behind the fact that he is not in cabinet because right now he is in hiding. No one has heard or seen from the member since he resigned from cabinet. He needs to come out of hiding. He needs to come to committee, and he must answer for his conduct involving this sordid and fraudulent matter.

[Translation]

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

The question is on the amendment.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1830)

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.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, December 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Housing if he would join Conservatives in axing the federal GST on housing so more Canadians could finally buy a home. Axing the federal GST would spark 30,000 new developments across the country per year. This tax cut would save \$40,000, or \$2,200 a year in mortgage payments on an \$800,000 house. Unfortunately, the Minister of Housing refuses to remove this burden from Canadians' shoulders and still clings to a housing accelerator fund that does not build homes.

The NDP-Liberal housing accelerator fund has failed Canadians. Toronto received \$471 million and it increased development cost charges by more than \$20,000; Ottawa received \$176.3 million and it increased development charges by between 11% and 12%; and my hometown of Abbotsford received \$25.6 million and it increased development charges by 54%. Indeed, even in the letter Abbotsford sent to the Minister of Housing after he requested a supportive letter from it, my own municipality could not tell the minister how many homes have in fact been built with the housing accelerator money it has received.

It is unfortunate that the government promised to lower rents, mortgages and housing prices, but has instead doubled these costs for Canadians. Before the Prime Minister took power, it took 25 years to pay off a mortgage. Now it takes 25 years just to save up for a down payment. Things have gotten so bad that some families believe they will never be able to pay off their mortgage, let alone get one. Only in Canada has housing become so unaffordable so quickly. Home prices are expected to once again break the records they set just recently.

Adjournment Proceedings

Between 25,000 and 35,000 people are homeless on any given night in Canada; 30% of Canadians who are homeless come from indigenous communities; and 22% of shelters are aimed at young homeless in Canada, while 20% of people experiencing homelessness are between the ages of 13 and 24 years of age. Also, 88% of renters say their goal of owning a home is out of reach, so much so that 28% of Canadians are considering moving to another country for greater affordability.

Back in October 2015, a month before the Prime Minister took office, it only took 39% of the median pre-tax household income to cover home ownership costs; now it is about 60%. Although it used to be normal for working-class youth to buy homes, 80% of Canadians now tell pollsters that home ownership is only for the very rich. Removing the GST on new homes under \$1 million would not only spark new developments across Canada; it would also remove a tax burden for new homeowners in Canada.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member. He is a good member, and I know he cares a great deal about his community. He talks about families in his community and across the country. What he does not mention is that the Conservatives would, right away, if they were to assume office, cut child care support, which has now moved in many parts of the country to \$10 a day. Where it is not at \$10, it will soon be, which will make life much more affordable.

The Conservatives would get rid of the school food program, which we have seen tremendous progress on. Recently, the provincial government in Ontario came together with the federal government. Manitoba and Prince Edward Island are also moving forward. What about support to help people living with diabetes? The Conservatives would get rid of free insulin.

To the point at hand, the Conservatives would also get rid of support for housing. The member talks about the so-called big, bold idea the Leader of the Opposition has put forward to lift GST off the purchase price of a home. How would they pay for that? They would do so by getting rid of the housing accelerator fund, which unfortunately my friend has not characterized correctly here today.

I do not discount at all the importance of development charges; they are an impediment to getting more homes built, and municipalities have to find a way to lower them as much as possible. However, what the member does not talk about is the systemic changes that come as a result of the federal government's attaching conditions to federal funding for municipalities, so that, for example, zoning changes can become possible.

Throughout too much of Canada's history, certainly into the modern day, the building of certain types of homes has been outright illegal in this country. In some neighbourhoods, it has been outright illegal to build duplexes or triplexes or fourplexes, or row houses or mid-rise apartments. All of those would add tremendously to affordability to help the families in the member's community. I especially have on my mind the young couples, for example, who have a tough time, if they can put together a down payment, finding a home that is affordable for them. They cannot do it right now in so many instances. Zoning changes would allow for that.

What the federal government has done is said that we recognize that restrictive zoning is a huge impediment to getting more homes built, and we have attached conditions onto municipalities that if they want federal dollars for housing and infrastructure, they agree to make zoning changes. Many are doing so. At this point, there have been 178 agreements, and the number will grow.

Finally, the member also fails to mention that the GST proposal of the Conservatives would lead to the cancellation of the government's infrastructure support for communities. We cannot have housing unless we have infrastructure, for example to connect water systems and roads to homes, and to make neighbourhoods possible.

We have said there is a need for infrastructure, and we have attached a condition for it too: that development charges be frozen to April 2024 levels to ensure that development charges in that issue are in the first instance dealt with, but also to ensure that municipalities are doing what they need to do to build more homes. This is why the condition exists, and the Conservatives want to get rid of it.

● (1835)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I think the member for London North Centre and I can agree on one thing: Zoning reform is indeed needed across Canada. It was under the previous election platform from the Conservative Party that zoning measures were introduced as a means to spur more development. The Liberals in fact copied our plan. The premier of British Columbia implemented similar policies and actually targeted my community of Abbotsford to put in those very zoning changes to encourage building of fourplexes etc. In fact my street is now zoned for fourplexes.

I will note that the member mentioned \$10-a-day day care. There is only one place in Abbotsford where people can get it, and that is on Eagle Mountain at the new elementary school. It is the area of the highest income of the entire community, so what the Liberals have done is given the people with the most money more support under the program. It is a shame.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, we will agree to disagree on that point; \$10 a day child care is moving forward in communities across the country. As I said, where it is not available, it will be available in communities throughout the land, and that is critical to our country's economic success and to our shared future.

On the point at hand, again, the accelerator fund, the proposal by the member's party would get rid of the program, which would be a detriment to communities in his riding. The Lytton First Nation is counting on the fund for 176 new homes. The Boston Bar First Nation is counting on 65 new homes as a result of the program. Finally, the Seabird Island Band is counting on the accelerator fund for 251 new homes.

I am not sure what the official opposition has against the federal government's working with municipalities and with indigenous communities to get more homes built and attaching conditions to ensure that more homes get built. We are doing that and we will continue to do it. The Conservatives are standing in the way.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, in my question for the Minister of Immigration on November 22, last month, I can only think that the minister's reply was not only to ignore the question but to deflect from accountability for his failures with a personal attack on me and my staff that was as pathetic as it was transparent. Let us be honest. We all know that someone resorts to personal attacks when they cannot defend a position based on its merits, and there is no defending the minister's complete and utter incompetence.

To set the record straight, while I have gotten used to the minister's insults, I will not tolerate outright misrepresentations made against me or my staff, especially when I have evidence that categorically proves that my staff and I have made several representations to the minister to assist my constituents and their families.

● (1840)

For the minister to state that I have “never brought a single case to [him]” is an outright mistruth. If the minister had any credibility, he would do the honourable thing and withdraw his offending and inaccurate comments. Perhaps he should check with his own departmental staff to see the cases that we have brought to the minister.

I also want to correct the minister as to why I am no longer sitting in my former seat. It had nothing to do with my not wishing to sit near the Green Party leader; I had done so for nearly two years. I moved simply because, due to the addition of a new independent member, I would be sitting next to an MP whom I personally feel does not share the same interests that I have for a democratic Canada. The immigration minister would do well to review why certain members of his party's caucus no longer find themselves within it, and he may actually learn something from the exercise.

It was unconscionable for the minister to suggest that I only asked my question of his useless administration of the immigration department for my benefit. It was out of utter frustration for individuals who are trying to make Canada their home but who are suffering from delays and from the inability to receive any answers as to why they are waiting years to have their cases actioned. I have raised with the minister cases of doctors and skilled tradespeople, individuals who would contribute to building a better Canada for all Canadians but who find themselves languishing in an immigration quagmire.

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Under the minister's direction, the morass that is IRCC seems better suited to letting the IRGC and other terrorists blatantly use and abuse our immigration and refugee systems in order to remain in Canada, rather than to help other people who would become contributing and law-abiding citizens. What an utter disgrace, and it gets even worse.

Due to the minister's incompetence, Canada is now facing heavy tariffs being laid on Canadian exports to the United States by the incoming Trump administration. Instead of bringing doctors to heal Canadians, the government issues new passports to admitted human traffickers. Instead of prioritizing tradespeople who would build the homes we need, the immigration minister abuses his power and uses a ministerial intervention, not for a life-or-death situation but to save a five-time criminally convicted foreign national who boasted of foreign financing to blockade Canadian roads, highways and pipelines.

It is high time for the minister to be dismissed by the Prime Minister before further damage is done to Canada and to those who not only want to make our country their home, but want to help heal Canadians and build the homes we need.

Therefore, would the parliamentary secretary not agree that the first step to fixing a problem is to acknowledge that we have one, and that at the core of it is an incompetent minister with twisted priorities?

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House and answer my colleague's questions.

We heard my colleague make personal attacks against a minister he disagrees with about the immigration system, but he also tried to stoke Canadians' fears over immigration. However, I want to say how important it is to our government and to the department that these matters be discussed at length and publicly. We cannot talk about specific cases, but I can speak to our general immigration guidelines. Every application is unique. Every applicant can apply for programs, but spaces are limited. It can take longer to enter the system if information is missing from an application or if applicants do not answer questions promptly.

Adjournment Proceedings

My colleague mentioned doctors. He also mentioned skilled workers, who are part of our society. My riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation is no exception. We have doctors who are there to support the community, who are willing to stay in remote communities. However, it is because of the immigration system that communities like ours in Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation can have good doctors. It is the same for agricultural workers. Farm workers depend on our culture. They depend on every type of product that reaches our plates. There are vineyards that benefit from immigration. Berry farmers benefit. It is also good for tourism development. For example, at Château Montebello in Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, foreign workers enable the hotel to offer world-class service.

We see that there is high demand to immigrate to Canada. Many applications are submitted every year. People want to benefit from the good quality of life that we have in Canada. The department is meeting its target of processing 80% of the applications, including in a certain number of important programs: citizenship, highly skilled workers in areas of federal jurisdiction, provincial candidates, family reunification for spouses and children. I am thinking about Tony, my barber, who is working on reuniting his family. They are in a wartorn country. We have an immigration system in place. We intend to modernize it, make it more accessible and easier, while taking into account the lack of housing in Canada. We have to reduce the level of immigration, but we have to do it the right way. We are also digitizing several programs to reduce the bureaucracy. We are improving services for clients and Canadians and aligning objectives for 2025 to 2027. I do have a message for my colleague, however: he needs to stop scaring Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary accused me of trying to scare Canadians. Let me tell everyone what is scary. What is scary is an ISIS terrorist, who is on video ripping

apart the body of his victim, receiving Canadian citizenship. What is scary is an admitted human trafficker being issued a new fricking passport. What is scary is a foreign national, criminally convicted five times, being saved from deportation, as ordered by the immigration department and upheld by the court. What is scary is that not only does the parliamentary secretary not seem to find any of this concerning, but he actively defends it.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is simple. If he was Minister of Immigration, would he be doing exactly what his minister is doing now, which is nothing, or would he be taking real action to protect Canadians, secure our border and protect our livelihoods so we are not taxed to oblivion by the incoming Trump administration?

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I have full confidence in our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. The minister is working to protect national security. He is working with the Prime Minister's Office and with the best experts in Canada. The Minister of Immigration is supported by various services to keep Canadians as safe as possible. We have strengthened our borders. We have invested in technology. We have also increased the number of officers at the border. Why have we done this? We did it to be better. As soon as new immigrants arrive in Canada, they go through a variety of services to ensure that they are safe in Canada and that Canadians are safe when we welcome these immigrants.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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