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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 27, 2026

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

NEW MEMBERS

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Ms. Auguste, member for the federal electoral district of Terrebonne.

* * *

[*English*]

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Tatiana Auguste, member for the electoral district of Terrebonne, introduced by the Right Hon. Mark Carney and the Hon. Mélanie Joly.

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Ms. Begum, member for the electoral district of Scarborough Southwest.

* * *

• (1105)

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Doly Begum, member for the electoral district of Scarborough Southwest, introduced by the Right Hon. Mark Carney and the Hon. Gary Anandasangaree.

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Ms. Martin, member for the electoral district of University—Rosedale.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Danielle Martin, member for the electoral district of University—Rosedale, introduced by the Right Hon. Mark Carney and Leslie Church.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT TO AMEND THE CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-225 for the second time in this Parliament.

However, this topic is nothing new. I had already spoken to this bill a few times. In 2020 and 2021, our colleague from Victoria and members for several other ridings had already introduced similar bills, and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights is currently completing its study of the government's Bill C-16, which deals in part with the same issue.

Bill C-225 is, I believe, the fifth bill dealing with the same issue. The reason for that is not that we are doing a bad job and need start over all the time, but that bills die on the Order Paper when Parliaments end. When we start over, we often like to wear both a belt and suspenders, as we say back home. We want so badly for something to work out that we often give it two or three tries.

As I was saying, what we are studying right now is Bill C-225. As for Bill C-16, we will very likely complete the clause-by-clause consideration on Wednesday, at which point we will finally be able to begin third reading of the bill, which also addresses the issue of coercive and controlling behaviour. It is a major problem.

I am obviously not the only one who thinks that this is a major problem. Our society is continuously undergoing major changes. That has always been the case and likely always will be. Certain behaviours that may have been acceptable 50 or 75 years ago, or even in the last century, are no longer acceptable, and I am sure some behaviours that we think are acceptable today no longer will be in 50 or 100 years. That is why we need to be continually reviewing the legislation that applies to certain situations, even though we may have done so a while back.

All types of violence are on the rise in Quebec, Canada and throughout the world. We now have to deal with extremist groups that have resources that they never used to have and that are spreading around the world and throughout our society. There is also domestic violence, another form of violence that may seem insignificant because each case involves fewer people.

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Domestic violence usually involves two individuals, the violent individual and the victim of their violence. However, it also affects the couple's children, their whole families and society as a whole, which must find a way to address this issue. Education is needed to bring about change. We can pass as many laws as we want in the House, but we can never prevent somebody somewhere from becoming violent and committing regrettable acts of violence without even thinking about it, without even making a conscious decision.

In my riding, last fall, Gabie Renaud was murdered. Her murder caused a lot of outrage, not only in my riding but across Quebec, Canada and the U.S. as well. The accused was an individual who had previously been convicted several times for domestic violence. I believe he had been convicted over a dozen times. I do not have the exact numbers but it was multiple convictions. He served his time in jail and was released. He paid his debt to society, as they say. He got out of jail, found a new spouse, abused her and then murdered her.

• (1110)

It is appalling. Although it may only affect a few close individuals, I believe it is an issue for society as a whole. As parliamentarians, this is primarily our responsibility, since it is up to us to establish a legal framework, or a body of laws, that will ensure these kinds of harmful situations are prevented.

Would locking someone up for the rest of their life when they are violent with their partner solve the problem? It probably would, but that is not what we want. We believe in lofty principles such as the presumption of innocence and people's rights and freedoms. They are enshrined in our charters, both in Quebec City and in Ottawa, and we must maintain them.

However, we must also work to ensure that this does not happen again. Bill C-225 proposes criminal measures. It proposes harsher sentences and consequences for such crimes in the hope that society as a whole will become more aware of how serious the situation is. There is also the hope that this may prevent more cases of domestic violence like this one. Does it work? I do not know. So far, the results have not been very encouraging. As I said earlier, cases of domestic violence are on the rise in Quebec, across Canada and just about everywhere.

I think we need to pass Bill C-225 and Bill C-16 and support the fight against these crimes through tougher penalties. However, I also think we need to invest more in rehabilitating inmates and educating young people to prevent this from continuing to happen. Education programs are already being provided to young people in schools. The goal is to try to prevent violence. Given that my wife was a teacher for her entire career, I can say that the situation is definitely not getting any better, despite everyone's efforts. Violence in schools is on the rise. I am not a sociologist, and for reasons I do not understand, unfortunately, people are obeying the established rules less and less, and they are disrespecting one another more and more. We cannot ignore the problem and we should all be extremely concerned about this. We may not be the ones teaching in our schools, but we create the legislative framework in which society as a whole operates.

These punitive measures, which involve imprisoning people and refusing to release them until a certain period has elapsed, probably

have some deterrent effect on people who have not yet been charged but who are watching to see what kind of laws we pass. However, that is not enough. We need to invest. Quebec has no money left, the roads are in bad shape, and people wait 24 to 48 hours in emergency rooms. There are little to no specialized services left in schools. This is not working anymore. People are overtaxed. In many cases, more than half of a person's salary goes to the government. Where does that money go?

I think the federal government should transfer funds to the provinces to help them address these issues. There needs to be more rehabilitation programs in prisons. There needs to be more educational initiatives for youth in schools. We need to find a way to rebuild a society that respects every individual and establish a legal framework that enables and promotes this respect and mutual awareness among all members of society.

I could go on at length about this, but I would not be adding anything substantial. We will agree on Bill C-225, but that does not preclude us from doing more to prevent crime through education and better rehabilitation in our penitentiaries, so that when people are released from prison after one year, five years, or twenty years, they come out different from who they were when they went in.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, usually when members rise in the House to speak to legislation, they do so with energy and exuberance. Today is very different. As a mother of two young women finding their way in the world, I really appreciate the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola for introducing this legislation; however, it is troubling that such legislation is even necessary, though it undeniably is.

Far too often, intimate partner violence has persisted as a hidden crisis in our country. It is often left unspoken, pushed to the margins of public discourse and too easily overlooked. In many communities, particularly those already facing systemic barriers, it remains especially difficult to name, confront or escape. Too many Canadians endure this violence in silence. Whether it is due to stigma, manipulation and coercion, or a lack of confidence in the system meant to protect them, victims are too often left feeling unseen and unsupported, regardless of whether they come forward.

This is happening to our friends and our families in communities across Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga and our entire nation. It is this reality that brings us to this debate today.

Legislation like Bill C-225 represents a strong step toward acknowledging the distinct and serious nature of intimate partner violence. It signals to the tens of thousands of Canadians that the government recognizes these harms and is prepared to equip law enforcement and the justice system with the tools needed to respond effectively and hold perpetrators accountable.

Intimate partner violence and related issues, such as coercive control, have occupied a significant part of my time here in Ottawa, especially during the last Parliament, as I had the privilege to chair the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, where we studied these issues extremely closely and thoroughly. We completed studies on gender-based violence and femicides against women, girls and gender-diverse people, as well as coercive behaviour. The committee prided itself, and I hope it still does, on its ability to put partisan differences aside and focus on the matter at hand: Canadians, especially marginalized Canadians, suffering in silence.

I know that this spirit of co-operation, championed by my predecessor, Karen Vecchio, will continue with the member for Belchasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, who I want to congratulate on her recent election to that position. I would also like to thank my successor, the member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, for her work in the chair over the past year.

Despite being one of the lesser-known committees, FEWO is by far the committee with the most to teach members in this place about working co-operatively and collaboratively, a lesson I hope is heeded and remembered as the government moves to amend committee composition. I think it is particularly fitting that the sponsor chose the Standing Committee on the Status of Women as the committee to review this legislation. That is what we need, a non-partisan approach to protect not just women suffering in abusive relationships but men and non-binary Canadians as well.

As I was preparing this speech, I went back and took a look at the witness testimony at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to see what was said and what arguments were put forward both by members and by witnesses. I was particularly struck by the panel that appeared on the very first day, along with the sponsoring member.

I am going to first acknowledge the conversation shared by Debbie Henderson. She spoke about the murder of her niece Bailey. She made the argument better than I ever could, so I would like to repeat a portion of her harrowing testimony:

The system currently continues to extend the trauma and torment by forcing families to wait and see whether charges will be upgraded to first-degree murder. Our family had four and a half months of stress and anxiety waiting for Bailey's murderer to have his charges upgraded to first degree. No family should have to live with the fear of wondering whether after a conviction they'll be forced, at a parole hearing in 10 years, to face the person who cruelly stole their loved one.

Given the severity and predictability of this type of violence, these murders should be treated as what they truly are—intentional, targeted and devastating acts. Killings in the context of intimate partner violence should be classified as automatic first-degree murders with the opportunity to apply for parole only after 25 years.

● (1120)

We must also begin labelling violence as what it is. Assault against an intimate partner is not the same as a bar fight or an altercation with a stranger; it's part of a pattern that is rooted in control, fear and escalating harm. Assaults should be clearly identified as intimate partner assaults so that the justice system can properly recognize the heightened risk they carry. Language matters because recognition drives prevention.

There must also be stronger safeguards at the point of release. Repeat offenders, especially those convicted of violence or threats against a partner, should not simply be released back into the community following police involvement. They should be required to appear before a judge and be properly assessed for risk, because when the system underestimates danger, families pay the price. There needs to be real accountability within the system that is meant to protect the vulnerable and prevent foreseeable tragedies.

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Bill C-225 represents an opportunity to close the gaps, to recognize the seriousness of intimate partner violence and to prevent other families from experiencing this unimaginable loss. Bailey should still be here. Her children should still have their mother. Our family should not be learning how to live with her permanent absence.

Her words are crystal clear, and they make perfect sense. The murder of a partner is one of the most visceral, raw, intimate things one can do. It is not done in the heat of the moment. It is often the culmination of months, if not years, of verbal, emotional and mental abuse. It is the final act in a series of escalating manipulation and exploitation, a literal living hell where, for far too many, the only escape seems to be cold-blooded murder.

Bill C-225 does not seek to, nor should it, address every single element of intimate partner violence. It needs to be considered as part of the wider tool box of public society in fighting this, a tool box that needs to include education, prevention and support for survivors and their families.

The bill is an important piece of the puzzle. It would send the message that, God forbid, if someone does this, if someone violates the sanctity of trust, love and commitment of their partner, justice will be delivered, not just to the perpetrator but, more importantly, to the family and memory of the person who was taken out of their lives. This is not vengeance. This is closure.

● (1125)

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill C-225, Bailey's law, an important step forward in Canada's response to intimate partner violence.

Before I go further, I would like to acknowledge once again that the bill has been titled "Bailey's law" in honour of Bailey McCourt, a woman from Kelowna, B.C., who was tragically killed by her estranged intimate partner in July of last year. Members of Bailey McCourt's family were present at committee, and their advocacy inspired multiple parts of this bill. It is important that we say survivors' names, and it is important for them, as well as for countless other survivors and families of those who have suffered intimate partner violence, that we continue our efforts to advance this most important work.

At its core, the bill responds to a reality that is far too present in communities across this country. Intimate partner violence remains one of the most pervasive and dangerous forms of violence in Canada, and in too many cases, it escalates to lethal outcomes. This is not an abstract policy issue but a lived reality for survivors, families and frontline service providers who see the consequences every day. That is why this legislation matters.

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What makes Bill C-225 particularly significant is not only its substance but the way it was developed. This is a bill that benefited from serious, sustained and good-faith collaboration between the sponsor of the bill, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola; the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada; the Minister of Women and Gender Equality; and members across the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Through that work, the bill was refined in a meaningful way.

A total of 18 government amendments and three opposition amendments were adopted at committee stage, reflecting a process that was focused less on partisan positioning and more on ensuring that the legislation is effective, constitutionally sound and responsive to the realities of intimate partner violence. That collaborative approach is something we should take seriously. It demonstrates that when Parliament works constructively, we can improve legislation in a way that better protects victims while maintaining fairness and coherence in criminal law.

As amended, Bill C-225 would advance four key pillars.

First, it would clarify how the criminal law treats intimate partner homicide in situations involving coercive and controlling conduct. By linking the most serious homicide classification to patterns of coercive control, the bill would ensure that the law better reflects the reality of sustained abuse while also guarding against unintended consequences for survivors who may have acted in response to prolonged violence.

Second, it would create a single, comprehensive intimate partner violence offence. Rather than relying on a fragmented set of offences, this approach recognizes the full spectrum of violent conduct that can occur in an intimate relationship, from threats and assault to more serious forms of violence. The bill would also support consistency in charging and clear recognition of patterns of abuse.

Third, it would modernize the treatment of seized property under section 490 of the Criminal Code by extending the initial detention period to 180 days. This adjustment reflects a balance between individual rights and the need for an effective and efficient justice system.

Fourth, it would strengthen the bail framework by introducing a targeted reverse onus for certain repeat or high-risk intimate partner violence situations, particularly when there is a demonstrated history of prior violence or breach of court-ordered conditions. This would ensure that the courts have the tools necessary to appropriately assess risk while maintaining judicial discretion and charter compliance.

Taken together, these amendments reflect a careful balancing exercise, strengthening protections for victims while ensuring the framework remains fair, proportionate and constitutionally sound.

Importantly, Bill C-225 does not exist in isolation. It is part of a broader set of reforms that this Parliament has been advancing to address violence, coercive control and systemic gaps in the criminal justice response.

• (1130)

For example, Bill C-16, the protecting victims act, takes a broader approach to coercive control, femicide and emerging forms of

technology-facilitated violence, including deepfake sexual imagery and sextortion. It reflects a recognition that patterns of abuse are evolving and that the law must evolve with them. Similarly, Bill C-14, the bail and sentencing reform act, would strengthen the response to repeat violent offending, particularly in cases involving sexual violence and serious harm. It would reinforce the principle that bail decisions must reflect public safety and victim protection.

When viewed together, these measures form a more coherent and modern framework for addressing intimate partner violence and gender-based violence more broadly. What Bill C-225 demonstrates is that progress is possible when we approach these issues seriously and collaboratively. It is encouraging that despite political differences, members were able to come together in committee to improve this legislation and move it forward in a way that reflects both accountability and fairness.

At the same time, we must be clear that no single bill will solve intimate partner violence on its own. Legislative reform is one part of a broader response that must also include prevention, early intervention, housing supports, mental health services and resources for frontline organizations. However, legislation does matter. It sets the tone for how the justice system understands and responds to violence. It signals to survivors that their experiences are recognized. It ensures that offenders are held accountable in a way that reflects the seriousness of the harm caused.

That is what Bill C-225 would do. It would strengthen the criminal law's ability to respond to intimate partner violence. It would improve coherence in how offences are prosecuted. It would enhance protection for victims. It would do so in a way that reflects careful committee work and cross-party engagement, so today I want to acknowledge the constructive role played by the sponsor of the bill, and the willingness of members from all parties to engage seriously with amendments that improve the legislation. That kind of work is not always easy in the House, but it is essential.

As we move forward, I would encourage all members to continue in that same spirit of collaboration as we consider related reforms, including Bill C-16, which is now before the justice committee and which we hope will be passed as soon as possible, and Bill C-14, which is now in committee study at the Senate and which we hope senators will help advance swiftly. Together, these reforms represent a broader effort to modernize Canada's criminal justice response to violence and exploitation.

Ultimately, the objective is not partisan. It is about safety, prevention and ensuring that when violence occurs in the most intimate of relationships, the justice system is equipped to respond effectively and fairly. For those reasons, I am proud to support Bill C-225 at third reading, and I encourage all members of the House to do the same.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is rare that a member of the House has to begin a speech with a trigger warning, but while some of what I am about to describe is difficult to hear, it is necessary if we are to fully comprehend why we must act on the issue of intimate partner violence. For far too many people in this country, intimate partner violence is not a topic; it is a lived reality.

My speech and the bill are dedicated to the victims of intimate partner violence who are watching today. They are dedicated to the family of Bailey McCourt and to all people who did not get the luxury of turning away from what I am about to describe, because these memories that I share today are theirs.

They are memories of being held down as the air is squeezed from their lungs. They are memories of complete control over their comings and goings, repeated blows and beatings, a knife used in a moment of rage, threats, isolation, abuse of children and pets, the shouting, the quiet calm before the rage, the knowing what that look means, and figuring out how to get the kids out of the room as if that means they will not hear. This is about rape, violence and death at home, in the very place that should have been the safest. It levels me every time I think about it, and we have to think about it in the House.

Some people make it through. Some find the strength to speak. We heard this just days ago at the justice committee, where a survivor described with clarity and composure how control is built piece by piece until there is almost nothing left of the vibrant woman who once was. We heard it in the status of women committee testimony around the bill. However, too many people do not make it through. Bailey McCourt, for whom the bill is named, is dead and unable to speak, killed by a person who was supposed to love and protect her, hours after he was released on bail. Therefore we must speak for Bailey, and more than that, we must act.

Bill C-225 is not symbolic. It is a response to a growing and serious problem. We know that the numbers do not tell the full story. We know that many cases go unreported. Fewer than one-third of victims report to police, which means that what police see is only a fraction of what is actually happening.

Even less is reported on in our communities, which means that what we know, what we hear about, is an even narrower subset, yet in Canada in 2024, there were over 128,000 victims of intimate partner violence. That is 356 victims per 100,000 Canadians aged 12 and older. That is more than one victim for every person who lives in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. If victims of intimate partner violence were voters, they would fill an entire riding on their own.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected. They experience intimate partner violence at three and a half times the rate that men do. When we consider homicides, we see that the numbers become even more stark. Nearly 80% of people killed by an intimate partner are women or girls. Among minorities and indigenous peo-

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ple, the numbers are even worse. These are not isolated incidents; this is a pattern, and beautiful Vancouver Island is not immune.

Communities on Vancouver Island face high pressure in the system. We see that not just in police files but also in wait-lists and in service demand. Hundreds of people in our communities are waiting for safe housing and support, with hundreds on wait-lists for transitional and second-stage housing. This means that people ready to leave violence often have nowhere to go. It means delay, and delay in these cases can be deadly.

Laura Gover, a 41-year-old mother and a professor at both Vancouver Island University and Camosun College, was murdered this January in her home by her ex-husband, the day before a court date, leaving behind two preteen daughters. Amy Watts was just 27 years old when she was thrown off a cliff to her death by her ex.

In many of these cases, there are clear warnings signs, prior incidents and opportunities to intervene. Too often, these opportunities are fleeting or missed.

• (1135)

An abuser does not rely on violence alone. They isolate. They manipulate. They reshape their victim's world until it becomes smaller and smaller. They create a world where their victim begins to doubt their own instincts and lose their identity, then their confidence in the world around them, and ultimately their ability to leave. By the time the physical violence escalates, many victims are already trapped in ways that are not always visible from the outside, and it does escalate. That is what makes this issue so difficult and so dangerous.

Our laws have simply not kept pace with reality. Bill C-225 would take important steps to close the gaps. It would create specific offences for violence against an intimate partner, recognizing that this is not the same as other forms of assault; it carries a higher risk of escalation and a higher risk of death. Bill C-225 would establish that when murder occurs in the context of intimate partner violence, particularly where coercive control is present, it should be treated as first-degree murder. This would reflect the reality that these acts are rarely sudden but rather are the result of a pattern. These provisions would remove the strain on families while they wait to see whether charges will be upgraded.

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The bill would strengthen peace bonds by introducing reverse onus provisions, ensuring that people who pose a risk are not released without serious consideration of the danger they present. The bill would allow for a seven-day period of custody for risk assessment, giving authorities the time needed to properly evaluate the threat and to take steps to further protect victims. The bill would address how evidence is handled, recognizing that these cases often involve patterns of behaviour over time, not just a single incident.

These are measured, practical changes designed to intervene earlier and to prosecute more effectively, because there have been too many cases where the signs were there, the risk was known and the outcome could have been different: Bailey McCourt, Laura Gover and Amy Watts. We say their names. These are cases that weigh on our communities and raise difficult questions about whether more could have been done.

Bill C-225, Bailey's law, is about doing better. It is about recognizing patterns of abuse before they escalate to the point of no return. It is about giving our justice system tools that reflect what we now understand about coercive control, intimate partner violence and the tools that law enforcement needs to respond, and it is about sending a clear message that this kind of violence will be treated with the seriousness it deserves.

All members of the House have spoken to survivors of intimate partner violence. All of us have tried to comfort grieving families. The question is no longer whether we understand the problem. The question is whether we are prepared to act.

I admire my hon. colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola for bringing the bill forward after extensive consultation. The bill reflects the voices of victims, the work of advocates and the painful lessons learned from cases that should never have ended the way they did: in trauma, in injury or in death. I applaud my colleague for working with communities and in committee to come up with meaningful legislation to push back the evil, to make the system see and to transform suffering into change.

Passing the bill would not solve everything. There is more work to be done on prevention, on support services and on ensuring that people have safe options when they need to leave, but Bill C-225 is a meaningful step. It acknowledges the reality of what victims face, and it would move us closer to a system that reflects that reality. We cannot keep responding after the fact. We must intervene earlier. We must take risk seriously, and we must put the safety of victims at the centre of our approach. That is what Bill C-225 would do, and that is why it deserves the support of every member of the House.

May the memory of each of the victims be a blessing, and may they inspire the House to take all steps possible to end intimate partner violence.

• (1140)

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by thanking my colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. Bringing forward legislation like this requires a willingness to engage directly with painful realities and to carry the weight of a story that no family should ever have to live through.

The care and seriousness with which this bill has been developed shows a genuine commitment to protecting women and ensuring that intimate partner violence is finally recognized in law for the danger it presents, because a crime unpunished is a crime unrecognized and encouraged. I also want to thank all the members of the House for recognizing the importance of this bill and allowing it to progress this far. I sincerely hope that sentiment continues and that we are able to make this critical bill into law.

It should come as no surprise to hear that crime is on the rise across Canada. We can see it in our daily lives. More and more Canadians are living in fear, and unfortunately, this trend extends to intimate partner violence. An increasing number of women are dying at the hands of their partners.

Intimate partners are connected through trust, proximity and often financial or emotional dependence. The person causing harm is not a stranger. It is someone with access, knowledge and control. When the law ignores that context, it ignores the heightened risk that comes with it. When these relationships become violent, it is all the more isolating, and it is that much more difficult for victims to seek help.

Further, when the numbers on intimate partner violence keep rising, it is a sign that the system is failing. Worse yet, when victims do seek help, like in Bailey McCourt's case, the risks to them are still not addressed. Bailey was a young mother of two living in Cloverdale. She was trying to protect herself and her children. The relationship she was in had become violent and threatening. This was not even a single incident. The harm happened more than once, and the danger continued to escalate.

On the morning of July 4, Bailey's former partner appeared in court and was convicted of assaulting her. By then, the justice system had a clear picture. There was a history of violence, there was a pattern of behaviour and there was a woman who had already been harmed and had made her fear known. Even so, after the conviction, he was released without a requirement for a full assessment of whether Bailey's life was still at risk. Hours later, Bailey was murdered in broad daylight. This shows that the system failed to treat intimate partner violence as the ongoing and escalating threat that it was.

We heard from the families of victims of intimate partner violence during the committee study for this bill. These women were daughters, sisters and mothers, and died at the hands of someone they knew and trusted. These families expressed how the patterns of coercive control went unrecognized all the way through the process, even when it came to sentencing.

Bailey's death shows us where our laws fall short. Bill C-225 is about closing that gap. It is about making sure that when violence happens with an intimate relationship, the law responds with the seriousness it deserves. The bill would amend the Criminal Code to ensure that when an intimate partner is killed in the context of a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour, that homicide is treated as first-degree murder. The same applies when the killing occurs while that coercion or control is taking place. In these cases, the law would no longer look only at the final act, but would recognize the pattern that led to it.

Bill C-225 also speaks to cases of manslaughter involving an intimate partner. Where manslaughter occurs in the context of coercive or controlling behaviour, the bill would require the court to consider whether a sentence of life imprisonment should be imposed. It would not dictate the outcome, but it would ensure that sentencing fully reflects the seriousness of the circumstances.

This bill would ensure that the law reflects what people already understand about how violence develops in relationships, and that this understanding is reflected at the point of sentencing. When there is a pattern of abuse, coercive conduct or controlling behaviour toward an intimate partner, that pattern must be treated as an aggravating factor.

This is a very important step, because when people who work in policing, in shelters and in community services talk about these situations, they describe something very consistent, which is that violence within relationships rarely begins at its most extreme point, but instead develops over time, often starting with controlling behaviour, such as decisions about where someone can go, who they can see and how they can spend money, before moving into intimidation and eventually physical harm. By the time the situation reaches its most serious point, there has often been a long progression of behaviour leading up to it. When that progression is not clearly reflected in how the system responds, it leaves a gap between what is known about the situation and how it is ultimately treated. That is a gap this bill is addressing.

● (1145)

One of the problems lies in how we look at violence in the law. An assault is largely treated the same, no matter the circumstances. Whether someone attacks a stranger on the street or harms the person they live with, trust, depend on and share their life with, the charge is often the same, but those situations are not the same. In Bailey's case, what stands out is not only the outcome, but the fact that there were visible signs that the situation was becoming more serious. When those signs are present, they should influence how the case is treated, particularly when it reaches sentencing, because that is the point where the court is deciding how the offence is recognized and how it is addressed. This bill would ensure that those patterns are not overlooked or treated as secondary, but instead are recognized as part of the offence itself when the sentence is determined.

There is also another part of this that is important to understand, and that is how situations can shift once the justice system becomes involved. There is often an assumption that once charges are laid, things are under control, but that is not how it works in practice. There can be a period where the situation becomes more unstable,

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particularly when the aggressor understands that consequences are approaching and that their freedom may be limited. That awareness can change behaviour and often escalate the threat.

When we look at these situations from that perspective, it becomes clear why it is important for the law to take a full view of what has been happening, not just what happened at one moment, but the pattern that led up to it. That pattern often tells us far more about the level of risk than the final act alone. Families that have lived through these situations often describe the same experience: they saw changes, they recognized that things were getting worse and they tried to raise those concerns. We also hear that they are left wondering why the response did not reflect what was happening. That question never leaves them because the outcome of what happened to their loved ones can never be undone. When the response does not match the level of risk, families are left carrying that loss, and that stays with them so much longer after the case itself. Families are broken and children lose their mother.

We have also heard from women who have had to take serious steps just to stay safe, leaving their homes and their communities because they did not feel protected where they were. When we take a closer look at what that actually means, it becomes clear that these are not small decisions. It means leaving behind stability, support systems and everything familiar just to create distance from someone who has become a threat in their life. It can involve finding a place to stay on very short notice, changing routines and trying to rebuild daily life while dealing with uncertainty and fear. For some, it goes even further. Victims might leave their region, their province and even the country they were born and raised in, because they believe it is the only way to protect themselves. When someone reaches that point, it says something about the gap between the level of risk they are facing and the level of protection they believe is available to them.

In my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries, and all across Canada, Canadians are concerned about situations where risk builds over time and where they are not confident that those risks are being taken seriously enough. They are not speaking in general terms. They are speaking about what they have seen and experienced. They are asking whether the system recognizes danger early enough and responds in a way that reflects how serious it can become.

For those reasons and more, I support this legislation. I would encourage all members of this House to take a close look at what this bill is doing and why it has been brought forward. We owe that to Bailey, to all victims, to their families and to women who may be in situations where the risk is already building. This is a step forward we can take together and it is one that will make a real difference because crime unpunished is crime encouraged.

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• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I will invite the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, to make his right of reply for five minutes.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. Today I am especially honoured to rise in reply to Bill C-225, the private member's bill that I put forward on intimate partner violence.

It feels as though it was just yesterday, but it was around November when I was speaking about this bill and attempting to persuade this House to pass the bill. It is against that backdrop that I just had a brief conversation with one of my hon. colleagues, the Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader, and learned the Liberals are going to support and vote for this bill. This is tremendous. This is how things are supposed to work.

I want to thank some people. The member for Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake had a profound impact on this bill. He gave up his private member's slot so this bill could move forward. I am profoundly grateful to him, and I think all victims of intimate partner violence and stakeholders are equally grateful. I am similarly grateful to the member for Cloverdale—Langley City, who gave up her spot in the private member's bill rotation. As a result, this bill got to a vote on third reading in what I think is probably record time. It is not very often we see private members' bills get to a vote within five or six months, and here we are at third reading. I am profoundly indebted to both members. I also want to recognize their service to Canadians and their recognition of victims of intimate partner violence. They are part of the solution by advancing this legislation.

I want to thank all who spoke on this bill, particularly, at third reading. I want to thank Bailey's family, Paige, Karen, Shane, Trish, Debbie, Bailey's children and all others who I may not have mentioned who are part of Bailey's family, her loved ones and those who continue to mourn her death.

I want to thank my staff, Rofiat Agboola, Stephanie Rennick, Jesus Bondo, Clare Cyr, Tracy Gilchrist and Christine Savage, for putting up with and navigating through all the ups and downs of this process. There have been a few speed bumps, but, ultimately, we got here. My belief is that we will see unanimous support for this bill when we vote on Wednesday.

I am mindful of the fact that the Minister of Justice's office played a key role in meeting with victims. I mentioned my staff, who went above and beyond and liaised with Zoe Romeo and other members of the minister's staff. There were extensive amendments at committee, and I want to recognize the collaborative nature of the status of women committee and all witnesses who appeared, too many to name in this short speech, but they know who they are.

I also want to thank all those who emailed me and wrote letters saying they suffered in silence from intimate partner violence and those who stopped me on the street, which happens to members of Parliament more than those watching at home might think, and thanked me. A few stand out in my mind. This bill is for them.

With the assurance that the Liberals will be voting for this at third reading, with my belief that all other members will be supporting this bill and against the backdrop of just having welcomed new members who will get to add their signature to this bill, I am incredibly honoured and profoundly grateful to stand as the sponsor of a bill that recognizes the scourge of intimate partner violence, but, more concretely, addresses the issue here where it should be addressed in Parliament.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9—CHANGES TO THE STANDING ORDERS

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Government Business No. 9, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

Members will recall that the preference for questions during the 30 minutes is provided to the opposition, but not to the exclusion of some members on the government's side. Members should keep their interventions brief and they may speak more than once.

I now invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise or use the "raise hand" function so the Chair has some idea of how many members would like to participate.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

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Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I do not know to whom to direct the concern, but my desk has been moved and I cannot rise in my place in this space due to the post and the chairs. I do not know what to do about this. Perhaps there can be some accommodation organized by House officers. I do not know.

I am sorry. I wish to speak, but this is the first time I have tried to rise in my new seat, and it is not really possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for her intervention. We will have a clerk come and speak to the hon. member, and I am certain we will find some accommodation.

We are moving on to questions during the 30-minute question period.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is meta-Liberal. The Liberals are stacking the decks on committees with this motion, and now they are moving closure and shutting down debate on that very motion.

We had only a couple of hours of debate last week. There are many members who wanted to speak out on behalf of their constituents to raise the alarm on this undemocratic measure, and now the government is shutting down debate. The irony here is so thick that one could cut it with a knife.

I have to note that the very first vote these new Liberal MPs will pronounce on will be a vote to shut down debate. Welcome to the Liberal Party of Canada. They can check their souls in at the door and follow whatever the whip tells them to do.

Why is the government using this undemocratic tool to shut down debate to stack the decks on committees? Why does it continue to oppose our reasonable amendment to protect the opposition's role on the oversight committees? Those committees have nothing to do with government legislation. They provide the accountability the Canadian people voted for at the ballot box.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, there is a long tradition in this place and in Westminster parliaments in general that a majority in the chamber be reflected in all of the institutions of the House. This motion would simply respect and honour that tradition.

Let us agree that it does not happen often that a government's status changes such that it grows to have a majority of seats in the elected chamber during the typical mandate of a government. This motion simply seeks to give effect to the long-held principle that governments that have a majority in the chamber have that majority reflected in the institutions of Parliament.

Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is incredibly shameful. What we are seeing here is the Liberal government, immediately upon swearing in three new members today, calling for a closure motion on a very important debate that Canadians expect this Parliament to hold.

The Liberals were not given a majority by Canadians. They stole a majority. Now, they are immediately abusing the power of a majority government to bring in this motion to give themselves a supermajority at committees so that they can ram through their legislation without proper debate. Canadians expect more from this Par-

liament than what the Liberals are offering today, and presenting a motion of closure is just inappropriate at this time.

• (1205)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, with all respect to my hon. friend, I need to challenge this notion that anything has been stolen. In fact, many Canadians appear to agree that much has been gained. One thing that has been gained is that the government can move quickly on getting things built in Canada and move to implement an economic agenda that seeks to insulate ourselves against world events, trade shocks, trade wars and all of the major developments happening in the world.

This will represent a government that is resolute, strong and there for Canadians and their jobs, and that makes sure that our economy keeps moving forward.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in their speeches, the opposition members are saying that what is happening here in Parliament is unprecedented.

I have a question for my hon. colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. Can he give us an example of any place in Canada or even under the British parliamentary system of a majority government that did not control or hold a majority of seats on committees?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. Naturally, good questions always come from the Outaouais.

We did a search and looked for examples. We have to admit that the situation before us is highly unusual: a government that changed status during its mandate. The fact that we came within one or two hundred votes of winning a majority in Canada during the last election plays a part in this situation. It should therefore come as no surprise that certain adjustments and electoral events like by-elections have since changed things here in Parliament.

I can tell my hon. colleague that we found no comparable examples. At the same time, however, there are no examples of a situation where a government that had a minority in the House held a majority of seats on committees.

[*English*]

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I approach the first anniversary of my coming to this place, it is a good chance to reflect on the lessons I have learned. One of the important lessons someone learns in this place is that just because we can do something, it does not always mean it is a good idea.

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The government motion we have in front of us would increase the size of committees, as well as the government's control over them. There is a Conservative amendment to this motion that would simply ensure that while committees are expanded, a small number of them would continue to be able to hold the government to account. It is not about blocking change. It is about protecting the independence and effectiveness of this place.

I would like to ask the government House leader if he can explain why the government would oppose a straightforward amendment to keep committees representative of the House and preserve committees' ability to properly scrutinize government activity.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith, but her suggestion would offend the very principles of the Westminster tradition that we are all sworn to uphold, whereby a majority in the Commons would represent a majority in the institutions of the Commons.

All committees are equal. There are no tier one or tier two committees. Indeed, there are committees that provide oversight. Those functions are vital to the functioning of Parliament. Members on those committees, including the chairs, who the member correctly points out are members of the official opposition, retain all of the rights, all of the privileges and all of the abilities to send for witnesses, papers and evidence that they had previously.

Suggesting that there has been a change in those committees' status would not be factual.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our colleagues opposite are certainly not wrong to say that the composition of committees should reflect the composition of the House. It is true that, according to British parliamentary tradition, a majority in the House normally means a majority on committees. However, that does not mean we have to agree with how things are done. We understand that the government has a short fuse and wants to limit debate.

Now, I would like the House leader opposite if he can share any recent examples, from either this Parliament or the provincial legislatures, of governments with very slim majorities that have used motions or gag orders to give themselves a supermajority on committees by adding two members instead of one. I would like him to explain why the government decided unilaterally to grant itself a much larger majority on committees than its majority in the House. I would like to know whether this is in keeping with British House traditions.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that this morning's motion is consistent with our finest parliamentary traditions, the ones we always uphold and to which we swear an oath about respecting our institutions, their precedents, their customs and their traditions. This has served our country very well. We believe that Canada is the best country in the world. The only thing we are giving ourselves is the right to continue to ensure that Canada remains a model democracy and that our democratic institutions reflect our finest traditions.

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Liberals' pursuit of an undemocratic majority, which they were not given at the ballot box, it has become clear that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government stand for absolutely nothing except the pursuit of power. They flattered and recruited a member who endorsed Avi Lewis and a member who endorsed the convoy, all in the pursuit of power.

I have a specific question for the government House leader about their pursuit of power. Is there any member of this House, even one, whom the Liberals would not accept as a floor crosser in their pursuit of a majority?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: He may be leaving himself open on that one, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that Canadians who live in Conservative ridings are increasingly asking their members of Parliament to be a positive part of the solution and a positive part of meeting these major and converging international crises, wars, supply chain issues, obviously, trade threats and climate change. All of these threats are converging, and Canadians are demanding a comprehensive and comprehensible response to them.

We believe that is what this government is offering. It should be no surprise that many opposition MPs and their constituents want to be a positive part of the solution.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking now from a spot that has a chair with no arms, which means I can stand up and address the hon. government House leader.

The purpose of this debate is to bring closure on the debate on Motion No. 9. I hope I will have a chance to speak more substantively to Motion No. 9 later this day.

On an unprecedented matter and doing something unusual, which is taking the matter of changing House committees from their normal process to a motion debated in the House that will be carried by what we now know is a majority of Liberal members, would the hon. government House leader explain why it is urgent that we close down debate?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, we believe there is a very fundamental, yet incredibly simple principle at play here, which is that the institutions of our Parliament, including the committees of the House of Commons and obviously the committees we share with the Senate, be reflective of the composition of the House of Commons. This is a reasonably simple debate. We appreciate that there can be different perspectives, different arguments. We have heard those articulated during the first portion of this debate. I am sure we will hear them articulated throughout the course of today, but we believe that this is a reasonably simple principle and that Canadians expect us to get on with our normal work, which is building Canada strong.

• (1215)

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, correct me if I am wrong, but democracy usually values open discussion. When I was elected in 2021, I was elected because I was sent here to this place to represent the views of all constituents of Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga.

In a time when there is a lot of frustration and cynicism and just confusion about how and what happens in this place, could the government House leader speak to the reduction of the amount of trust that Canadians have in parliamentarians and processes in this place?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I do not know the member's constituents nearly as well as she would, but my bet is that the people of Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga want to send members here who respect, uphold and cherish the democracy we have built, one that has served our country so well and has helped build the best country in the world. That member's constituents, like my own in Gatineau, believe we should respect the rules. It is to fight cynicism that we uphold these principles and uphold these traditions and these conventions that we and the people who have come before us have put in place. Upholding them, respecting them and following the rules is how we build and maintain trust in our democracy and in our Parliament.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is part of a dangerous and divided world. We are seeing a lot of uncertainty throughout the geopolitical sphere, a war in the Middle East causing unprecedented gas hikes at home, and just ongoing chaos. How important does the member think it is to have stability here at home in Canada? We are seeing the Prime Minister continuing to be recognized as a global leader, bringing that leadership to Canada but also recognized around the world for his leadership and stability.

How important does the member think it is for that unity and stability to follow through here at home in Canada?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Hamilton puts his finger on something very, very important, which is the need to fight cynicism. We must produce results in this place. Part of producing results in this place is respecting our traditions, respecting our democracy, respecting the institutions we have built together across party lines and over the years, and then implementing the plan we were sent here in election to implement. Indeed, our Prime Minister is having much success around the world and throughout our country in proposing measures and implementing our plan. We just want to get on with the job.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is the world coming to? As we know, only one in three Canadians has confidence in Parliament and our institutions, according to Statistics Canada. Today, the government is telling us that it wants to fight cynicism. Democracy is not just a slogan that can be repeated over and over again in press releases and here in the House. Words have meaning.

Today, the government is telling us that it wants to change the rules because it managed to recruit some members who were not

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originally on its side. Now that it has a majority in the House, the government also wants a majority on committees. However, voters did not give this government a majority mandate. How can we counter cynicism when the government acts in this way? It does not respect the will of the people.

Does my colleague believe that fighting cynicism means not respecting citizens' choices and what they voted for?

• (1220)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite.

We believe that respecting democracy and our institutions means respecting the standards, conventions, traditions and rules that have been established over the years as we have built the best country in the world. I believe that the people of Rimouski, just like those of Gatineau, expect us to respect and uphold the finest traditions of our democracy.

I would add that just recently, we were able to ask the people of Terrebonne what they thought. They clearly told us that they wish to continue along the path proposed by this government, and that is what we intend to implement with the new composition of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a new member here, I came to realize very quickly that committees are the workhorse for Parliament. I fear that the government is using majority to shut down debate on controversial legislation, something where Canadians might lose their voice. As well, committees are a place for transparency and accountability. I am just wondering if speed is now more important than scrutiny when writing the law for this country and for Canadians.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, for much of Canada's history, we have helped build the best country in the world by having committees, as the member points out, be the workhorses of Parliament, but they have done so collegially, cooperatively and by working together, and whatever the composition of the House of Commons, none of that is going to change. In fact, I would argue that we are maintaining and respecting the rules, the norms, the conventions and the traditions that the people who came before us have built together, and the composition of the House also being the composition of committees is the democratic way to get things done.

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Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, the government House leader keeps saying things that are just not true. He says it does not happen often that the status of a government changes from a minority to a majority. It has never happened at the federal level. That is something that has just never happened. He says that there are not two tiers of committees. There literally are two tiers of committees. There is a tier that handles legislation and is chaired by government MPs, and then there is a tier that is chaired by opposition MPs, which generally does not deal with legislation at all but provides oversight. Those two different tiers are literally spelled out in the Standing Orders. He says that these committees would still have the power to produce documents, compel testimony and order information from departments. What he fails to mention is that this would happen only if motions pass at committee, and he is now stacking the deck with two extra Liberals.

Would Liberal MPs on these committees keep the government House leader's word and commit to voting in favour of motions to investigate Liberal corruption, motions to compel testimony and motions to demand information from the government, yes or no?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, it may be a semantic debate, and it may be a pointless one, but there are no two tiers of committees. There may be committees with different job descriptions, as there should be when there are some 30 total committees of the House of Commons and joint committees with the Senate. Of course, committees are masters of their own agenda and their own destiny. They decide what to take up and they decide what to debate, and I am sure members on those committees would individually examine the merits of all proposals that come forward, whatever the source of those proposals, opposition or government, and make their own decisions on the merits of what is being proposed.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote the member for Gatineau, the government House leader, who told the House on April 16, "Canada's democracy is one of the most stable and strongest in the world, but it would be unwise to take this for granted."

I have news for him: Only one in three people in Canada trusts Parliament. What the government wants is to give itself a majority, even though that is not what the people voted for. It says that it wants to do this in order to fight cynicism. I would like my colleague to tell me how his government can claim to be strengthening democracy in Canada while acting against the express will of the people.

• (1225)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I have very different views on what it means to respect the people. I think that respecting the electorate, respecting the people, means respecting the traditions, precedents, norms and rules of our democratic institutions. I think that fighting the public cynicism that he mentioned means standing up and standing together for our democratic institutions.

I think that today's proposal is a step in that direction.

[*English*]

Scot Davidson (New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had to pull up my question for the government House leader. I am glad he is here today. I asked the member for Winnipeg North this question. I did not quite get a satisfactory answer.

When justifying the government's motion, the government House leader called this principle "undeniable". Does the government understand that the entire purpose of parliamentary committees is to ensure that nothing is undeniable, that every action, every claim, every program and every policy is examined on its own merits? A government that declares itself undeniable has told this House exactly why it must not be trusted with committee control, control that Canadians did not give it in a general election.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I think we agree on much more than we disagree on. We believe as well that, as my hon. colleague points out, the essence of this Parliament, of its institutions and of its committees is to hold governments to account and perform these kinds of examinations of laws, budgets, estimates and differing matters in terms of public policy, to ask probing questions and to demand accountability. That is the essence of our parliamentary democracy.

None of that changes, of course, with the proceedings today. Committees retain the same powers, the same abilities and the same privileges that they have to call witnesses and compel documents and testimony. All of that continues, and we would argue that it is in our best democratic traditions that we are debating this matter today.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague put it well when he said that in Canada, our political system is based on respect for traditions and principles. This ensures that the system is stable and the government is able to function properly.

If we look at the last 10 majority governments in our history, whether they were Liberal or Conservative, we see that there has never been a case where a committee chair had to cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie. This morning, I heard some opposition members taking issue with the proposed composition of committees.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons whether the government's proposed composition better reflects the traditions of our parliamentary system than the suggestions put forward by the opposition during this morning's debates.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from my hon. colleague, who comes from a region of this great country that is very special to me.

The committee composition that the government is proposing does two things. It ensures that the chair of each committee will not have to routinely cast tie-breaking votes, because committee chairs, like the Speaker of the House, should not be settling debates. They should be called upon to do so only in exceptional circumstances. That is why we proposed the membership that we did.

It is also because the other option would be to remove an opposition member from each committee, and we did not want to do that. We wanted the opposition parties to have the same level of representation as they do now.

[English]

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the government House leader say multiple times today that the government wants to maintain the institutions that are in place and that it wants to respect democracy. I find it quite ironic that these words are even being used, considering that in over 150 years of Canadian Parliament, active recruitment to secure a majority has never happened in this place. Not listening to Canadian voters and not respecting a minority government has never happened in this place.

My question for the government House leader is very simple: Will the government keep the makeup of committees as elected, as the Canadian voices elected them to be at the time of Parliament, instead of now trying to get a supermajority for itself to hide from accountability?

• (1230)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, there is no such thing as a supermajority. That is an American term. Parliaments with a certain number of members do not have more power than Parliaments with a lower number of government members.

What I would say in response to my hon. friend is that the current majority is no less legitimate than any other majority that has existed in Canadian history. We elect members of Parliament to the House. The member, my colleagues on this side of the House, and I are all elected as individuals. Yes, we wear a party label and we have a party banner, but we are elected to exercise our conscience and our judgment as we approach the House. The member knows, because I am sure she is living it, that many Canadians in opposition-held ridings expect their member of Parliament to be part of a positive solution for the country.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, the government is saying that it respects tradition and that this is why it should have a majority on committees, despite the will of the people, who did not give the government that majority. I simply wish to remind the government that there is also a tradition here in Parliament of consulting the opposition parties. Today, however, there has been no such consultation. Can my colleague tell me whether, by any chance, he has forgotten that consulting the opposition parties is one of Parliament's traditions?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, since we have not altered the Bloc's representation on the committees in any way, there was no reason to consult them.

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[English]

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

[Translation]

The question is on the motion.

[English]

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote, please.

• (1315)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 104)

YEAS

Members

Acan	Al Soud
Ali	Alty
Anand	Anandasangaree
Auguste	Bains
Baker	Bardeesy
Battiste	Beech
Begun	Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River)
Bendayan	Bittle
Blois	Brière
Carney	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chang
Chartrand	Chatel
Chen	Chenette
Chi	Church
Clark	Connors
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dandurand
Danko	d'Entremont
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Earle	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson	Fancy
Fanjoy	Fergus
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Fry
Fuhr	Gaheer
Gainey	Gasparro
Gerretsen	Gladu
Gould	Grant
Greaves	Guay
Guilbeault	Gull-Masty
Hajdu	Hanley
Harrison	Hepfner
Hirtle	Hodgson
Hogan	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Idlout	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Joly

Government Orders

Joseph	Kayabaga	Duncan	Epp
Kelloway	Khalid	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Klassen	Koutrakis	Fortin	Gallant
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Garon	Gaudreau
Lamoureux	Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Gazan	Généreux
Lapointe (Sudbury)	Lattanzio	Genuis	Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Lauzon	Lavack	Gill (Brampton West)	Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Lavoie	LeBlanc	Gill (Windsor West)	Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Leitão	Lightbound		Godin
Long	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	Gourde
Ma	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Goodridge	Guglielmin
MacDonald (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Groleau	Hallan
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Maloney	Gunn	Ho
Martin	McGuinty	Hardy	Jackson
McKelvie	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Holman	Jivani
McKnight	McLean (Esquimalt—Saanic—Sooke)	Jansen	Kelly
Ménard	Mendès	Johns	Kibble
Michel	Miedema	Khanna	Kmiec
Miller	Mingarelli	Kirkland	Kram
Morrissey	Myles	Konanz	Kronis
Naqvi	Nathan	Kramp-Neuman	Kusie
Nguyen	Noormohamed	Kuruc	Lake
Ntumba	Oliphant	Kwan	Larouche
Olszewski	O'Rourke	Lantsman	Lawton
Osborne	Petitpas Taylor	Lawrence	Lemire
Powlowski	Provost	Lefebvre	Lewis (Essex)
Ramsay	Rana	Leslie	Lobb
Robertson	Rocheffort	Lloyd	Majumdar
Romanado	Royer	Mahal	Mantle
Sahota	Saini	Malette (Kapuskaing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)	
Sarai	Sari	Martel	May
Sawatzky	Schiefke	Mazier	McCauley
Sgro	Sheehan	McKenzie	McLean (Calgary Centre)
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	McPherson	Melillo
Sodhi	Solomon	Menegakis	Moore
Sousa	St-Pierre	Morin	Morrison
Sudds	Tesser Derksen	Motz	Muys
Thompson	Turnbull	Nater	Normandin
Valdez	van Koeverden	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Vandenbeld	Villeneuve	Perron	Plamondon
Watchorn	Weiler	Poilievre	Redekopp
Wilkinson	Yip	Reid	Rempel Garner
Zahid	Zerucelli	Reynolds	Richards
Zuberi — 173		Roberts	Rood
		Ross	Rowe
		Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
		Scheer	Schmale
		Seeback	Shipley
		Simard	Small
		Steinley	Ste-Marie
		Stevenson	Strahl
		Strauss	Stubbs
		Thériault	Thomas
		Tolmie	Uppal
		Van Popta	Vien
		Viersen	Vis
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NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
	Bexte
Berthold	Blanchet
Bezan	Block
Blanchette-Joncas	Bonk
Bonin	Bragdon
Borrelli	Brock
Brassard	Calkins
Brunelle-Duceppe	Chambers
Caputo	Chong
Champoux	Cody
Cobena	Dalton
Cooper	Davidson
Dancho	Dawson
Davies (Niagara South)	Deltell
DeBellefeuille	Deschênes
DeRidder	Dowdall
Diotte	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9

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

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are known for their cynical pursuit of power at any cost. Today, they are plumbing new depths.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing some noise from the other side, so I will say that the only convictions Liberals have are the criminal kind.

Today, what the Liberals are doing is ignoring the will of the voters. They are undermining—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The member for St. Catharines is rising on a point of order.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, this is a contentious matter, but perhaps the language should be parliamentary.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I agree with the hon. member.

I would just encourage the member to move on and not use that type of language to impugn the motives of members. We are going to leave it at that, but I will encourage the member to move on.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and will reflect upon your advice.

What we have happening today is that the Liberals have taken unprecedented steps in a pattern of trying to undermine democracy in this country. Canadians voted for a minority government, and the Liberals used all kinds of devices and connivance to draw in members with whatever conviction, with no consideration whatsoever of the beliefs of those members. They took members who, in normal times, would obviously not fit what the Liberal Party pretends to be ideologically, and they did so out of desperation for power.

Mr. Speaker, you have chastened me to not be too strong in my language, but I hope you will not mind me quoting some of the things the new member for Scarborough Southwest said about Liberals. Of course, I welcome her to this place, and I think she has had some very thought-provoking things to say in the past. She previously described the Liberals as “the surest path to greater evil”. What a thing to say. I am not sure if she could say that in the House. She described the Liberals as “the surest path to greater evil”, as well as “untrustworthy” and “conniving”. Those were things the new member for Scarborough Southwest had to say about the Liberals before she decided to run for them.

The member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong said that many Liberals think she belongs in jail. She said that about two weeks before she crossed over to join the Liberals. This is not about bringing people together with some common agenda. This is about Liberals who care about nothing except power and who are pursuing power, not as a means to advance anything in particular, but for its own sake.

Today we are debating this motion that they brought forward and quickly moved closure on. Now that, through backroom deals, they have a majority that Canadians did not give them at the election, they have quickly moved to impose upon committees a supermajority that Canadians certainly do not want.

I note that we have multiple committees right now where Liberals are actually filibustering. At the human resources Committee, which I am a member of, and a number of other committees, Conservatives are working with our Bloc colleagues in seeking infor-

mation from the government. Liberals are filibustering those committees.

● (1320)

Members can bet that those requests for documents will immediately be shut down as soon as the Liberals who have taken the majority feel that they no longer have to be accountable. In fact, in the past when they have had minority governments, they have refused to hand over documents, even when they were ordered to by committees. These Liberals are completely allergic to accountability.

In a minority situation, committees must at least work together to achieve results. They are, in a way, forced to work together because no party has all of the power. This has led to very constructive outcomes.

In the last year, the committee that I am a part of has done very good work. We have tabled eight reports in the House, which is very productive work as a committee, because people have had to negotiate. It is not always easy. Sometimes there are conflicts, but people have had to negotiate to get a result.

Liberals do not want to have to do that hard work of listening to other ideas and working with other parties. They are pursuing power at all costs. They are pursuing power in defiance of democratic norms and in defiance of the wishes of Canadians. They would like to be able to impose their will on committees, prevent documents from being requested and prevent the necessary accountability work from being done.

I also want to also point something out, which may be something worth the reflection of the individual members of the government. Even if we were to accept the argument that the committee should have the same proportions as what the Liberals have engineered in the House through floor crossings, we might then say that there should be six Liberal members. Maybe we would say that, if we believed their arguments, we would go from five to six. Why are they asking for seven?

Why are the Liberals, who now have a very narrow majority in the House, seeking a supermajority on committees? It is particularly worth asking because, in practice, given the rounds of questions and the activity of those committees, the fifth, sixth and seventh members of that committee likely would not have an opportunity to do too much. The nature of time allocation within a committee, with questions, etc., means that the extra member at the table is probably just going to be sitting there, for the most part. Why does the government want to have seven members?

Government Orders

I will say that this demonstrates that the Prime Minister has as much respect for his own caucus members as he does for members on the other side of the House. He wants to have extra members there who will likely not have an opportunity to speak very much. He wants to keep them busy. He wants to prevent them from being able to engage in and challenge things, even in the very measured and limited way that government members sometimes do.

What the Prime Minister is trying to engineer is the greatest amount of power, not merely for his party, but for himself. He views members of Parliament as encumbrances to his exercise of executive power, to his pursuit of power, for reasons that are largely unspecified and that have not been articulated up until this point.

This is a sad day for Canadian democracy. The Prime Minister, through connivance, has weakened this institution and is pursuing a reality in which he can rule without the normal checks and balances that are supposed to be a part of our system, and without the checks and balances that Canadians voted for when they chose to elect a minority government.

We need to fight back against this abuse of power and defend democratic norms in this country. Conservatives, despite the limitations the government is imposing on us, will continue to fight for democracy and for the common good.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating to watch members of the opposition perform in this place for their social media accounts, for their Conservative propaganda networks. That is what we are seeing here. This is just complete nonsense. It would be nice if, for once, the members opposite would actually work with the government, work together to do what Canadians are asking our government to do, which is to move forward with the critical issues at this time and not just perform for their propaganda networks.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, it is unsurprising to hear this member in particular complain about Conservative use of social media accounts. During the debate on Bill C-9, my colleague from London and I were doing a livestream, explaining to the public what was going on, and this member came by, trying to offer some comment. We invited him to join the livestream, but he quickly ran away.

If he objects to how we use social media, I would like to give him another chance. He can join me for a livestream to discuss the bill and to share his thoughts with my followers. I will certainly happily share my thoughts with his.

Canadians are frustrated by the attack on democracy that we are seeing. Canadians deserve better.

• (1325)

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart following the tragic stabbing of a 16-year-old boy by a 19-year-old boy in Windsor. At the centre of this unimaginable loss are two mothers, one grieving the loss of a child, the other grappling with the reality of what her child now faces. There are two families whose lives will never be the same. Their pain is shared by friends, loved ones and a wider community that has been left shaken, wondering how something like this could happen so close to home.

The most fundamental responsibilities of any government are to protect its citizens and ensure that families feel safe in their communities and secure in their daily lives, yet while Canadians are confronting tragedies like this, the government is focused on expanding committees and engaging in procedural manoeuvres that feel far removed from the realities people are facing.

Is anyone on the government benches truly paying attention to these families, to those mothers or to the communities they were elected to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I need to give the member time to respond.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to those families in his community.

When it comes to the work of the House and its committees, I would say that, in minority parliaments, such as what Canadians chose in the last election, we are forced to work together in a different way, because anything that moves forward at committees requires two parties, at minimum, to be able to have a meeting of the minds.

That process of negotiation is not always easy, but I think we have seen in the last year that things can get done and done well, especially because our party has been responsible. We have expedited legislation where appropriate and we have opposed it where necessary, but now the government is trying to eliminate the need for that co-operation and create the circumstances in which it can impose its will undemocratically on the House. It is wrong, and it is not what Canadians voted for.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, only one in three people in Canada have confidence in its institutions, including Parliament.

Given the Liberals' tactics for poaching members from both the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party in order to secure a majority, this is by no means a run-of-the-mill situation. It is the first time this has happened in Canadian history.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on something. Does he think that the public will gain or lose trust in institutions when they fail to respect the will of the people as democratically expressed in elections?

Government Orders

[English]

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, this question of trust in institutions is a very important one. We would all like to see a situation in which institutions are both trusted and worthy of that trust. Our democratic institutions, though, have been weakened over the last 10 years under the Liberal government. We see continuing efforts to undermine those institutions, including the failure to hand over documents when ordered to, efforts to unilaterally impose changes on the structure of Parliament and the pursuit of power regardless of the constraints that are supposed to exist on that power. That has implications for how Canadians view, and feel represented within, our institutions, and the right response is for those institutions to try to rise to the occasion and be worthy of that trust once again.

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to add my voice to Government Motion No. 9, which addresses composition of standing committees of the House of Commons and joint committees.

Over the course of this debate, it has been undisputable that committees are microcosms of this place in form and in function, both reflecting party standings in the House and performing the necessary duties to scrutinize legislation, propose solutions and represent the diverse views of Canadians. The granularity of this work being undertaken in committees is what makes us more informed, effective and thoughtful legislators, better equipped to support Canadians. The government has taken a balanced approach to additions to standing committee and joint committee compositions that we are discussing today.

This routine motion in response to the changing landscape here in the House would add to the voices currently at committee. I would point members to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, first edition, which makes it clear on page 819: “Where the governing party has a majority in the House, it will also have a majority on every House committee.” There is an undeniable, long-standing principle in Parliament: A party that has a majority of seats in the House also has a majority in committees. This is at the core of our Westminster system of government.

The motion proposed by the government reflects how things are done in the House of Commons. The numbers on committees ensure that the government has a majority and the chair of the committee does not routinely need to vote to break a tie, because the number in the House means that the Speaker does not routinely need to vote to break a tie. The makeup of the House of Commons has changed since committees were formed almost a year ago. The government has gone from a minority government to a majority. Naturally, this means a change must occur to the makeup of committees to reflect this change.

The motion would not put opposition parties in a position to lose representation. Current committee members of both the government and the opposition would remain unaffected and would be able to continue the important work they have undertaken over the course of the last year. The government recognizes the time these members have invested in familiarizing themselves with their respective committee subject matter and in building trusting relationships with stakeholders and members of all political stripes.

Do my colleagues across the way not agree that having more voices on standing committees would add to the diverse perspectives being shared during a committee's deliberations? Do they not agree that an additional voice from the Prairies or Atlantic Canada, from rural or urban centres, would better inform our studies, reports and amendments?

I have heard my opposition colleagues speak to what they say Canadians voted for in the last election. The message our government was elected on was to build Canada strong. I recall conversations at the door about a year ago being rooted in addressing affordability concerns, managing geopolitical threats and investing in Canada's future. These are the exact issues that committees are expected to undertake. They are a mechanism to further dive into these issues, propose solutions and improve legislation.

I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Halifax. Usually I am the one to drop that note on other members' desks. I apologize. I am sure the opposition would much rather hear from the member for Halifax than the member for St. Catharines.

We have seen collaboration take place since the start of this Parliament, as the government has thoughtfully considered ideas and supported amendments brought forward by opposition parties. Members of the finance committee studied, in depth, Bill C-15, the 2025 budget bill, and proposed amendments. The government brought forward amendments to address stakeholder concerns and, without hesitation, supported opposition party amendments to provide more security to consumers and ensure guardrails on ministerial power.

Even going back to my days in the 42nd Parliament, I did not see a bill go through without amendments by the opposition accepted. This level of collaboration has also been shown on legislation brought forward by private members, as was the case at the public accounts committee when government members proposed reasonable amendments to ensure the scheme and policy objectives of Bill C-230, the creation of a debt forgiveness registry, would work effectively if established.

Government Orders

• (1330)

I have heard claims made against Government Motion No. 9 as changing the checks and balances on government. I find this unreasonable for the simple fact that the mechanisms that hold government to account remain unchanged; ministerial appearances before committees, opposition day motions, the study of estimates and question period are just a few examples. On the valuable studies committees undertake and reports they present, if a member feels that their concerns have not been adequately reflected in a report, they have an opportunity to present the House with a supplemental report to ensure their views are on the parliamentary record.

Last spring, colleagues on both sides of the aisle welcomed many new faces to our caucuses who were eager to represent their constituents, share ideas and work hard to improve the lives of Canadians. Allowing more members on committees gives our colleagues the opportunities to be better legislators. As my colleagues have previously stated, this is a time of unity, to bring Canadians together, to represent the needs of our communities and to listen to one another so we can build Canada strong.

Demonstrating to Canadians that we, as political parties with differing views on matters of policy, can come together, working collaboratively and constructively, is of utmost importance given the challenges we face. We should define ourselves in this time of crisis by the things that unite us, not by those that divide us. This is a critical time in our nation's history, when we will, hopefully, define ourselves not by our partisan interests but rather by how we work together to deliver what the country needs in spite of our partisan interests. We can disagree, but we must rise above pettiness to deliver on our promise to put Canadian interests first.

In my speech, I have noted times that we worked together, whether on government legislation or in private members' business. Let these examples be the rule, not the exception.

I have listened to the debate for a bit, and I am genuinely surprised. Many of these Conservative members were here in the 41st Parliament, and the things they are proposing right now did not exist then, when the Conservatives held the majority. I believe the previous speaker was a member of Prime Minister Harper's office, and I doubt he was proposing the things in the PMO that he is coming to the House today to deliver.

This is how Parliament has worked in this country. The composition of the House has changed, and as such, the committees—

An hon. member: Never before.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, they said that this has never happened before. They are right. It has not happened before, but what has happened many times in this country's history is a majority government, and when there has been a majority government, there has been a majority in the House.

An hon. member: It is not an elected majority.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the member is heckling me: "It's not an elected majority." Each member here was elected and is accountable to their constituents. Canadians did not elect a majority or minority government; they had 343 elections of members. Since then, there have been by-elections. What has happened is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that in all this criticism, they never stand up in the House of Commons, if they claim that this Parliament is illegitimate, and call for an election at this time. I am curious why this is. I am genuinely curious why, at this point, they question the legitimacy of floor crossings when in the last Parliament they were actively seeking Liberals to cross the floor to them. It was not an issue 18 months ago.

Now they are upset that we have formed a majority and that the rules of the House, the traditions of this place and of Westminster Parliament, allow us, and dictate that there should be, a majority on committees.

They can heckle. They can shout, scream and pound their fists, but this is the way it has been and the way we hope it is going to be.

• (1335)

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has put a new face on what happened. In fact, the government has been trolling our benches, and some did slither over.

The House is not reflective of Canadians' wishes. About 93% of the vote goes to the party now, by custom, and about 7% goes to the individual. By law, yes, we are elected as individuals.

The Liberal Party's explanation is that it is "a big tent", but I would say it is more like a circus tent.

I wonder if the member agrees with the views of his party's newest acquisition on vaccines and the convoy.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I do not know that there was a question there. It is time for questions and comments, and it was more of a comment.

These members are clutching at their pearls, but there have been Conservative majorities in this country, not only provincially but federally, and they had no problem with the majority on committees being Conservative.

They can shout and scream and pound their fists, but they know I am right at the end of the day. We will see what happens at the end of this vote.

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• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can say what they will, but we are dealing with a government that no longer has the slightest regard for our parliamentary traditions. It started in the previous Parliament, when the government decided to change the rules of how the House operates without unanimous consent.

Today, they are telling us that it is normal for a majority government to have a majority on committees. That is true, but I asked the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons a question, and he was unable to answer.

I would like my colleague to tell me when, in the recent history of the House, a government with a very slim majority decided to give itself a supermajority on committees. I would like him to tell me whether it is not more in keeping with the traditions of the House for a government's majority on committees to be proportional and similar to the one it has in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, it is shocking that members speak to parliamentary tradition, but they do not look to the actual history of this place, where this always happens. Again, I point the member to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, first edition, page 819: “Where the governing party has a majority in the House, it will also have a majority on every House committee.”

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 6, we are going to be commemorating the Battle of Stoney Creek, a tremendous victory by British regulars, indigenous warriors and Canadian militia over a hostile American government. Of course, just down the QEW, past St. Catharines, we have Queenston Heights, where Major General Isaac Brock fell defending Canada against another hostile American government.

The member for St. Catharines is acutely aware of the history of the Battle of Stoney Creek in the Niagara area. Can he comment on how important it is to have Canadian unity and stability?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I say this with all due respect for the historical events the member is referring to, but we are debating a time allocation motion.

I think it is written in the Standing Orders that we must not ask questions that are off topic. That is in the Standing Orders, and this is not a point of debate. Mr. Speaker, I invite you to make a ruling on this.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member. Yes, according to procedure, interventions must be relevant.

[*English*]

I am assuming the member has some relevance he is attaching to the motion at hand. I will give the member about five seconds to wrap up. He is nearly out of time.

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, my question to the member for St. Catharines is, how important is it to have Canadian unity and stability to move forward in these uncertain times?

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, it is fundamentally important, as the Prime Minister pointed out.

With respect to Isaac Brock, with indigenous support, defending Canada, what was then British North America, against a hostile American threat, we are facing difficult times with our American neighbours.

We got voted in, as I said in my speech, on a plan to build Canada strong. Canadians have spoken. They have spoken in the last three by-elections, overwhelmingly, and have confidence in the Prime Minister, confidence in this government and confidence with us moving forward, especially on issues with respect to trade with the United States. This is fundamentally important and something we need to keep going on.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for St. Catharines says that it has been fundamental to parliamentary democracy. I wonder if he would agree with me that the process of parliamentary democracy in this place is continually, regardless of who is in power, to reduce the rights and powers of smaller parties in favour of their own rights and powers.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, as I have read from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, I will point to that again. Governments that have a majority have the majority on committees. This is what the motion is seeking to do.

Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Government Motion No. 9 and the importance of parliamentary committees.

As members of Parliament, we have been individually elected by our constituents to represent their interests in the House of Commons. Not only do we individually represent the interests of our constituents, but together we represent the fabric of who Canadians are. We are a privileged minority of Canadians elected to this House, representing Canadians from every beautiful region of this vast and breathtaking country.

We are standing here today to represent our constituents' interests and as a representation of the will of our constituents. Every moment of our work as parliamentarians is ultimately aimed at good governance for the benefit of all Canadians. Much of this work is done in committees, which is the subject of Government Motion 9.

Before I speak to the motion itself, it is important to highlight the role of committees in the Westminster system. One of the fundamental functions of members of Parliament is the development of legislation, and the crux of this work is done in committee. Committees are the venues that allow for and facilitate the detailed examination of not only legislation but also other policies and issues of interest to Canadians.

Government Orders

Committees allow us to have focused and detailed discussions on what would be possible in the chamber, where debate is focused on the principle and scope of each bill. Committees are the place where we can review legislation, hear from witnesses and conduct clause-by-clause consideration of bills. It is through this process of legislative scrutiny that we can voice our views, ask experts questions, raise our concerns and debate proposals with each other.

Our ultimate, and I suggest shared, objective is to improve legislation when it is needed. It is this scrutiny and detailed examination in committees that not only strengthens accountability but also allows members to work together to find solutions to issues facing Canadians. That process and engagement builds trust with Canadians. It encourages open and transparent government.

Participation in committees gives members the opportunity to scrutinize decisions and expenditures and monitor progress. Robust and constructive debate in committees is the means through which we arrive at solutions.

Committees produce extensive and comprehensive reports, thereby adding to greater transparency for Canadians by ensuring public access to information about the government's work. These studies help inform government policy and future legislative proposals. Committees are also incubators of non-partisan collaboration. They allow members from across parties to come together to address complex problems in a collaborative manner and foster consensus on difficult issues.

Committees allow us to build camaraderie among members so we can bring forward our diverse perspectives as members from across the country, consider evidence-based insights and come together to advance the interests of Canadians. The discussions and insights that committees generate enrich our parliamentary process and our ability to work together.

Further, the common thread to the work of all committees is that of hearing directly from Canadians, stakeholders and experts on a range of issues that are important to who we, together in the House of Commons, represent.

With every committee study undertaken, through witnesses and briefs, we get to hear the diverse aspects and views on a particular subject, from business leaders to academics, scientists and Canadians from across this great country who are directly impacted by or have a strong interest in any one of the numerous subjects that the parliamentary committees study. This engagement of experts, stakeholders and citizens acts as a bridge between Parliament and the broader Canadian public.

Committee work can also bring international perspectives on how we can best achieve our policy goals. Hearing about experiences from like-minded countries can help facilitate an exchange of ideas and ways to incorporate good ideas from abroad that can be implemented here in Canada. By bringing in the international perspective, we get to hear about emerging issues and opportunities to learn from the experience of other countries. Through this process, we learn about what worked well, what did not and how to avoid challenges that other countries have experienced.

Every time I chair or participate in a committee meeting, I am struck by the extent to which witnesses want to share their expertise

and lived experiences to inform the studies we undertake. The fact that we hear from witnesses with varied and sometimes opposing perspectives helps us stay in touch with the diversity of Canadian perspectives.

What Canadians think and their views on issues not only matter; they are important to informing us as members of Parliament. All of what we learn through parliamentary committees is taken into account as decisions are made. I encourage all Canadians to get involved in the work of our parliamentary committees. It is democracy in action.

● (1345)

Now I will turn to Government Motion No. 9. It is important to take a moment to note that the standing committees and special joint committees in this Parliament have mandates that are focused on the issues that are important to Canadians and to Canada. The reason they are called standing committees is that they should reflect the standings of the recognized parties in the House of Commons. In a Westminster parliamentary system such as ours, the composition of parliamentary committees is historically determined by reflecting the representation of political parties. This balances the need for representation with effective governance. The composition of committees should always reflect the standings in the House, and Government Motion No. 9 simply seeks to uphold and institute the principle that underpins our parliamentary system.

● (1350)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is indeed a very special day because just recently we had the three by-elections and today we have the largest women's caucus in the history of Parliament. I believe just over 70 women have been elected and that is worthy of recognizing.

We saw earlier today the government and opposition working together as we had an opposition private member's bill pass through the House. It amplifies what the Prime Minister said a year ago. He wants to see Parliament work in a collaborative way. I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on how we continue to move forward in a collaborative way, working for the betterment of Canadians first and foremost.

Government Orders

Shannon Miedema: Mr. Speaker, being chair of the environment committee in recent weeks, I have enjoyed how we have worked together across parties to move the work forward in our environment and sustainable development committee. In my past life, working at the City of Halifax, it was all about working across different perspectives to get the work done and to have shared objectives to move things forward. I am really pleased that we have had cross-party support for various private members' bills on both sides of the House. I hope that we can continue to collaborate for the betterment of our country.

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the adjustment of numbers of members on committees. I would like to ask her to explain fully, not just to the members on this side of the House but to Canadians, why the government chose to move to a 60% makeup on committees instead of the 51% that it has in the House. Is this to shut down the opposition completely at committee, or is there some other diabolical scheme behind all of this?

Shannon Miedema: Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are no diabolical schemes happening on this side of the House.

I know that there was a decision to make regarding whether Conservatives are removed from each committee or Liberals are added. My understanding was that the more well-received path forward was to add Liberals rather than to take away Conservatives so that we could still have robust conversations in committee.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during her speech, my colleague said that the parties' representation on committees must reflect their representation in the House. The Liberals hold 51% of the seats in the House, but they want 58% of the seats in committees. Can my colleague explain to me how she can say in her speech that she wants committees to operate like the House, when in reality, the Liberals are giving themselves much more power with this new majority that they engineered by enticing floor crossers?

[*English*]

Shannon Miedema: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that parties with status sit on committee and that it is the history of Canadian government and Westminster government that when there is a majority government, there is a majority on every single committee.

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am quite concerned. The NDP has a strict rule. We actually tried to pass a bill to not allow floor crossings but to leave that up to the electorate. The current Liberal government has passed several bills that are in violation of our Constitution and charter rights: Bill C-9, Bill C-5 and Bill C-12. Now, we are going to have a situation where the majority Liberals pass bills that are completely unconstitutional. I am wondering how the hon. member feels about that.

Shannon Miedema: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely disagree with my esteemed colleague on the other side that the bills we have passed are unconstitutional.

Regardless of how different members feel about floor crossings, they are part of the history of Canadian government. They are completely legal and allowed. I have no further comment.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Edmonton West will have about four and a half minutes before we interrupt him for statements by members.

The hon. member.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to fit in so much on an attack on democracy and explain it in four and a half minutes, but I will try.

I am pleased to rise on Motion No. 9, another attempt by the Liberal government to quash all opposition and criticism of its government. Now, this is not about the legitimacy of the Liberal majority, however vile the betrayal of their constituents was by the MPs who crossed. It is still allowed within the Westminster system and I do respect that. I recognize the government as a majority.

The Prime Minister commented that he was going to do things differently, with a less partisan approach to governing. Of course, that comment aged about as well as his comment that affordability is at its best in the last 10 years.

I am fine with the Liberals adding more members to committees. I would note that when the Liberals formed the committees in June, they actually reduced the number of committee members they normally had, stating they did not have enough members to do the work. It is funny to see them now actually bumping up two people on committees, when really they could make do with one. Again, I am perfectly fine with it. They do have the majority.

However, this House and Canadians deserve oversight from this government. For the sake of accountability and transparency, we need better oversight. That is why we are proposing that the operations committee, known as the mighty OGGO, the public accounts committee, the access to information committee, also known as the ethics committee, and the status of women committee maintain the current setup, which is traditionally led by the opposition, with the Conservatives and the Bloc making up the majority. Again, this is for accountability and transparency.

Now, we have seen the contempt the Liberals have for this Parliament. It is clear again and again, and this goes back to 2015. The Liberal government always seems to say that it wants an audience and not an opposition. We have seen motions like this in the past.

Statements by Members

Going back to the 42nd Parliament, we had Motion No. 6 from this government. Many of the Liberals here today were here for Motion No. 6. That was a motion that would have gutted Conservative opposition members' ability to submit Order Paper questions. The government was going to decide what was a valid Order Paper question, not an elected MP. The minister would decide. Also under Motion No. 6, the government stated that it would decide what was an appropriate amount of debate. The Liberals would stop the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP from debating certain issues. Of course, we all remember that famous night of Motion No. 6, known as “elbowgate”, when the former prime minister manhandled the late Gord Brown and also elbowed an NDP member in the chest.

During COVID, we saw Bill C-13 under the Trudeau government, and again, a majority of the members opposite were part of that government. With Bill C-13, the Liberals brought in a bill that would allow them, for 21 months, to have unlimited taxing and unlimited spending without any oversight or vote in this Parliament. The whole reason Parliament exists goes back to King Edward I, 1295, when calling the model Parliament, stating that “ what touches all should be approved by all”. Here we have the Liberal government under Bill C-13 saying that, for 21 months, what touches all should only be approved by the Liberals and not by all elected members.

This government has a long history of trying to stamp out opposition. We have seen this government and my colleague from Winnipeg North constantly call out any opposition to Liberal plans as obstruction. Let us remember that the finance minister refused to table a budget last spring. He said there would not even be a budget in 2025, and yet when the Liberals finally tabled a budget, 10 months later, they accused the opposition of purposely delaying it.

I understand I am out of time for this half of my speech about Liberal obstruction and blocking accountability. I look forward to continuing it afterwards.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

LORAN SCHOLARS

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Anna Brozek and Moriah Aladejebi, two students in my riding who have been named 2026 Loran scholars. From a pool of over 5,400 applicants, the Loran Scholars Foundation recognizes just 36 young leaders who demonstrate strength of character and a deep commitment to service.

Anna Brozek from Lockview High School in Fall River organizes student-led leadership conferences in Halifax. She is a former member of the Nova Scotia Youth Climate Council. She heads her school's environment club, serves on student council, organized a youth climate seminar and helped design an indigenous student space at Lockview High.

Moriah Aladejebi from Sackville High School is co-president of student council, co-captain of the varsity volleyball team and an inclusion support worker for children with disabilities. She volunteers weekly as a Sunday school teacher, organizes activities for international students and helped facilitate a Black youth-led conference.

Needless to say, these are two impressive young women. On behalf of everyone in our riding, I congratulate Anna and Moriah on their great achievement.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have signalled their intent to remove collaborative amendments to Bill C-11 dealing with military sexual assault, amendments that survivors asked for and experts supported overwhelmingly. The Liberals are about to single-handedly undo decades of progress in military conduct. They would make things worse than we can imagine.

At the heart of the debate is something very simple: giving survivors the choice between the civilian and the military justice systems. If the government removes these amendments, survivors would have access only to the civilian justice system. The consequences would be immediate and unavoidable. There would be institutional trauma and revictimization among survivors who trusted us to listen. Going forward, a majority of military sexual assault cases would go unaddressed or untried. Civilian police forces would be handed cases they have repeatedly said they cannot absorb, and worse, the majority of cases would not meet the threshold for prosecution by civilian authorities.

The Liberals would be opening the door to predators, abandoning survivors of military sexual assault and deceiving Canadians into believing they care about victims. It is shameful.

* * *

POLIO

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks World Immunization Week. Immunizations are the most effective tool against preventable diseases such as polio that have ended or changed the lives of millions of people. In Canada, it was only a few decades ago that we were finally able to eradicate polio. Since then, through the efforts of advocates and mechanisms like the global polio eradication initiative, we are on the brink of eradicating polio globally.

Nations around the world are pulling back their funding, yet polio anywhere remains a threat to people everywhere. Canada has continued to be a global leader in immunization, but we still need investments like the GPEI to stop outbreaks through surveillance and to ensure polio eradication through vaccinations.

This World Immunization Week, we can be proud that Canada's continued support for immunizations and the global polio eradication initiative is helping ensure that future generations can live in a world free of polio.

* * *

ONLINE SAFETY OF CHILDREN

David McKenzie (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, children, youth and families from across Canada are joining us on Parliament Hill. They are here with Children First Canada, a national charity headquartered in Calgary Signal Hill. They are calling on the government to table comprehensive legislation to ensure that kids are safe online. Among the youth here today are 12-year-old Zachary and 11-year-old twins Zahra and Leena. They were eight years old and seven years old respectively when the government pledged to put in place online safety legislation.

Where are we today? We are seeing a rapidly changing digital landscape where social media, gaming platforms and now artificial intelligence are shaping children's lives in ways that can easily be harmful. In 2019, one in four children aged 12 to 17 reported being cyber-bullied. By age 25, one in five Canadians is diagnosed with a mental illness.

We must do more to secure childhood for Canada's children. I urge the Liberals to stop the delay, break the pattern—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

* * *

[Translation]

NEVILLE FAMILY

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to pay tribute to the Neville family from Venise-en-Québec in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi, who donated 75 hectares of ecologically valuable land to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. This gesture is part of a family story that dates back to 1846. Seven generations have lived on this land, and now they are choosing to make it part of our collective legacy.

• (1405)

[English]

This kind of leadership truly makes a difference. It shows that protecting our natural environment is the responsibility not only of governments but also of citizens who choose to take action for future generations.

[Translation]

That is exactly the purpose of Motion No. 15, which we adopted recently: to provide better support for the voluntary conservation of private land, while recognizing the importance of ecological gifts, whether in the form of land or money.

Statements by Members

[English]

I want to give my thanks to the Neville family and to all people who are stepping up to protect our natural environment. Their leadership is inspiring, and their legacy will live on for generations to come.

* * *

[Translation]

CANCER RESEARCH

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April is Daffodil Month. For the Canadian Cancer Society, this flower is a symbol of resilience and solidarity.

When a person is diagnosed with cancer, it turns their whole world upside down, but they do not have to fight this battle alone. Today, my thoughts are with the families across the country who are battling cancer because, behind each statistic, there are faces, families, friends and colleagues who are courageously facing this disease.

My thoughts go out to Lyne Bernatchez, a valued member of the Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk parliamentary team who is currently battling cancer with amazing strength and dignity. The whole team stands with Lyne.

Together, let us continue to support research so that, one day, we will finally be able to say that cancer is a thing of the past.

* * *

[English]

FREEDOM DAY IN PORTUGAL

Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 52 years ago this month, on April 25, 1974, the Portuguese people ended nearly 40 years of dictatorship, and they did it almost without firing a shot. Soldiers placed carnations in the muzzle of their rifle. People then walked into the streets, and they chose democracy.

In my constituency of Davenport, which is home to the largest Portuguese community in Canada, we remember *25 de abril* every year, but this year we remember it differently. Democracy is being tested again by authoritarianism, by disinformation and by leaders who treat freedom as inconvenient. The Portuguese diaspora knows this story. It members left a country that gave them too little future, and they came to places like Toronto, where they built new lives and strengthened ours. From their new home country, they also helped keep a freer Portugal alive.

Canada stood with them then, and we must continue to stand for democracy now, at home and everywhere it is threatened.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

MICHEL GARANT

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to Michel Garant, a Lévis resident originally from Saint-Lazare-de-Bellechasse who died much too soon on March 20 at the age of 68.

As a building contractor, he made his mark by delivering superior workmanship, particularly while contributing to the restoration of heritage buildings across Quebec. Following an accident in 2004 that left him a paraplegic, Mr. Garant showed remarkable resilience. He became actively involved in his community as a paracyclist, completing a cross-Canada tour to help the organization Fondation MIRA and launching the Pédal-Don fundraising initiative.

Through his involvement with the Association des personnes handicapées de Bellechasse, he became an inspiration to many. He was also a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He leaves an incredible legacy.

I offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones.

BILODEAU CANADA

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last month, a Lac-Saint-Jean business was showcased on the world stage at the 98th Academy Awards. The work of Samuel Bilodeau and the entire team at Bilodeau Canada was highlighted at the Oscars ceremony when Guillermo del Toro's film *Frankenstein* won the award for best costumes.

Frankenstein, which won three Oscars, owes part of its success to the work done in the town of Normandin. It was there that more than 250 pieces were created for the production, far away from the bright lights of Hollywood. From the coats worn by the main characters, including Victor Frankenstein, to the wolves' costumes that appear in the film, Bilodeau's craftsmanship has impressed many.

The Lac-Saint-Jean-based clothing manufacturer also designed four sleds and several trappers' barrels for the Oscar-winning feature film. These pieces, crafted in the heart of Lac-Saint-Jean, contributed to the film's success and are a source of immense pride.

I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Samuel and Marie-Josée and to the entire Bilodeau team.

• (1410)

[English]

LOBSTER FISHERY

Kent MacDonald (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, spring lobster season is under way in P.E.I. Traps were set on the southeast shore of the island this morning, and the north side will be setting their gear tomorrow morning. As islanders, setting day reminds us how important the lobster industry is for P.E.I. More than 8,000 jobs and close to \$1 billion in economic activity are connected to the seafood industry. Setting day reminds us of the personal connec-

tions we all have to lobster fishing and the generations of work behind those handmade traps and uniquely coloured buoys.

Islanders all know someone braving the winds and the waves with that first load of traps. We all worry a little, especially for the younger fishers entering the business. It is my nephew Jarrett's first setting day with his own fleet. Good luck, Jarrett, and good luck to all fishers. When that first trap comes up over the washboard, we are all waiting for that first feed of lobsters with some good old ADL butter.

On setting day 2026, I ask this House to join me in wishing fair weather, a safe return to port and full traps for all.

FUEL TAXES

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need relief at the grocery store. They need relief at the pumps. Conservatives are calling on the Liberal government to scrap all federal gas and diesel taxes for the rest of the year. Cancelling a third of the taxes for a third of the year is not good enough. It is time to remove the fuel excise tax, GST on gas and diesel, the industrial carbon tax and the clean fuel standard tax for the rest of 2026. Conservatives want a country where Canadians do not have to choose between a full grocery cart and a full gas tank. Let us get it done.

HIGHWAY 69

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of Vinod and Shilpa Patel, two constituents of Sudbury who tragically lost their lives on April 7 in a highway accident on Highway 69. This is not an isolated tragedy. Sadly, Highway 69 has claimed too many lives. For years, the people of Sudbury and northern Ontario have been promised that this dangerous corridor would be completed. Those promises have gone unfulfilled, and families are paying for that inaction with their lives. I have written to Premier Ford urging him to finally deliver on this long overdue commitment. The four-laning of Highway 69 is, in every way, a matter of life and death. Vinod and Shilpa Patel deserved to come home. Their families deserve better. Every driver on that road deserves better.

I call on the Government of Ontario to act before another family is torn apart on a highway that should have been made safe years ago.

FUEL TAXES

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are feeling the pressure every time they pull up to the pump, and they are not getting the relief that they were promised. The Prime Minister claims affordability is a priority, but his plan only scrapped a fraction of fuel taxes for a fraction of the year, leaving Canadians still paying almost 15% more than the Americans because of high taxes and a weak dollar. In Newfoundland and Labrador, families are already stretched thin, paying more at the pump, more for groceries and more to heat their homes. Conservatives are calling for real relief: the removal of federal gas and diesel taxes for the rest of the year, including the GST on fuel. That would mean up to 25¢ per litre in savings, about \$20 every time a family fills up and over \$1,200 this year.

At a time when Statistics Canada reports the worst food inflation in the G7, Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and filling their tanks. Conservatives will keep fighting to lower costs and deliver the real results Canadians are still waiting for.

* * *

[Translation]

UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON EDMUNDSTON CAMPUS

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, 2026, we are proud to be celebrating 80 years of French-language post-secondary education in north-western New Brunswick.

Collège Saint-Louis, founded in 1946 by the Eudist Fathers, and Collège Maillet, founded in 1949 by the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph, laid the groundwork for what would later become the Edmundston Campus of the Université de Moncton. Since then, this institution has played a vital, essential role in regional development and in the economic, social and cultural vitality of our francophone, Acadian and Madawaska communities. Over the decades, the Edmundston Campus has trained generations of students and nurtured cutting-edge research.

To mark this 80th anniversary, the Association des anciennes, anciens et ami.es de Saint-Louis—Maillet, the Edmundston Campus' alumni and friends association, is sponsoring a series of activities, including homecoming celebrations in June. Congratulations to everyone who has played a role in shaping this institution's rich history. Long live the Edmundston Campus of the Université de Moncton.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

FINANCE

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to understand that the public purse is not his personal travel rewards card. I know that he likes to fly but there are no Aeroplan points when the government spends billions of dollars that it does not have. There is no free checked bag for the next generation. There is no lounge access for taxpayers, and there is

Oral Questions

definitely no complimentary upgrade when the country is stuck at the back of the plane with a maxed-out credit card.

Since taking office, the Prime Minister has added \$90 billion in net new spending and the cost of running government is up 9% in under a year. The Liberals are now spending more to service our national debt than the government collects in the GST, or, as it should soon be called, the debt servicing tax. That should set off alarm bells for everyone in our country, and anyone who thinks this can continue should give their head a shake. When interest payments eat up more of the budget, there is less money for health care, defence and infrastructure.

Canadians do not need a Prime Minister asking for a higher credit limit. They need a government that remembers that taxpayers are the ones footing the bill.

* * *

ONLINE HARM

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we welcome to Parliament Hill children and youth from across Canada, including members of the Young Canadians' Parliament, who are here to deliver a simple and urgent message, that time is up on online harms. They are joined by parents whose lived experience gives this call for action profound urgency and who are standing up to protect other children from similar harm.

Together, they are part of the growing Countdown for Kids movement led by Children First Canada, reminding us that children have waited years for online safety legislation at the cost of real and preventable harm.

As a parent and as someone who has fought hard for children's rights in Canada, I look forward to the government presenting legislation on online harms and to the House finally putting the safety of our kids first and passing it quickly. These children are asking for us to act now, to put their safety first, to work together and to show that protecting children is never optional.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to *Le Journal de Montréal*, while this Liberal Prime Minister continues to pay the nation's bills with a credit card, half of Quebecers aged 50 and older are worried they will not have enough money for retirement. What is more, twice as many Quebecers now have to go back to work during retirement just to make ends meet.

After 10 years of inflationary deficits and taxes, the Prime Minister is increasing spending even further. Is he going to reduce these inflationary deficits, or is he going to charge it to seniors' credit cards?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is Monday and that the Leader of the Opposition is always on the lookout for good news. Well, we have some good news this morning: Canada's first sovereign wealth fund, the Canada Strong fund. This fund is designed to help create collective wealth, to enable Canadians to build major projects from coast to coast to coast, and to set us apart among the G7 countries.

Let us celebrate a Canada for everyone. Let us celebrate a fund for a strong Canada.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sovereign wealth fund with no wealth. There is no wealth to put into it. It is really more of a debt fund. It is a credit card budget: more debt, more costs, more inflation, more taxes, more of the same. This Prime Minister is just another Liberal. He inherited a jaw-dropping \$31-billion deficit from Justin Trudeau, but since then, he has added \$90 billion in inflationary spending.

Tomorrow, will he reduce the deficit or will he put all that on the national credit card and drive up the cost of living even more?

• (1420)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have more good news for the Leader of the Opposition. The International Monetary Fund recently said that Canada has the second-fastest growth in the G7. It is nearly twice as fast as Germany's, almost twice as fast as Japan's and almost three times as fast as Italy's.

This morning, we announced a sovereign wealth fund so Canadians across the country can build the country with us, create collective wealth and invest in these major projects.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more debt, more costs, more taxes. The Prime Minister is just another Liberal. The Liberal government doubled the debt, doubled housing costs and doubled food bank lineups. The previous prime minister left behind an outrageous \$31-billion deficit for this fiscal year. Since that time, the new Liberal Prime Minister has been spending at even higher rates and putting it on the national credit card. That means the bankers make more and Canadian workers and seniors keep less.

Will the Prime Minister at least cap the deficit at Trudeau's \$31 billion or will he break through that limit and put it on the credit card?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition is looking for good news. Well, I have good news. He will have to update his QP cards because we announced the first Canadian sovereign wealth fund, a fund to build Canada strong, a fund that will allow Canadians to build this country like never before, to invest in projects across this country, to allow Canadians to invest alongside the government and to make sure that we all benefit. This is the essence of a Canada for all.

We are building together and we will benefit together. Let us build Canada strong together.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was for the Prime Minister, who is again in hiding and, instead, what we got is a man talking about a sovereign—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I do not know if that is metaphorical. If it is, it is a bit of a stretch. I want to warn the hon. member, who knows better, to avoid those kinds of allusions.

The member may continue.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we need to actually have wealth for a sovereign wealth fund. What the Liberal Prime Minister is proposing to do is use the credit card in order to put \$25 billion into a Liberal slush fund. This is after the Liberal government doubled the debt and gave us the worst inflation in 40 years.

The Prime Minister is spending more: more taxes, more costs, more of the same. Will he put it all on the nation's credit card again tomorrow?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me help the Leader of the Opposition. After all, it is Monday. The International Monetary Fund just said last week that Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7. The Canadian economy is the second-fastest growing economy in the G7. It is growing almost twice as fast as the one in Germany, almost twice as much as the one in Japan, and almost three times as much as that of our colleagues in Italy.

The Canadian economy is strong. We are going to build Canada strong together. We are going to have our Canada Strong fund. Canadians will benefit—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot answer questions in the House of Commons because he has been wrong on every single major economic issue of our time, and the results are what Canadians are paying for now: more costs, more debt, more taxes and more of the same. In fact, the Prime Minister has given Canada the worst food inflation in the G7, the worst household debt in the G7, the worst housing costs in the G7, and the second-highest unemployment in the G7. Tomorrow, he intends to put it all on the national credit card.

Trudeau had a \$31-billion deficit left over for this year. Will the Prime Minister break through that limit and put that on the national credit card as well?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, inflation has been in the Bank of Canada's target zone for some time, but we are continuously intrigued by the notion of inflationary spending.

I want to ask, and have the Leader of the Opposition answer with absolute clarity, is it the Canada child benefit that is inflationary? Is it the Canada disability benefit? Is it the Canadian dental care plan? Is it the groceries and essentials benefit? Is it old age security? Exactly what is inflationary spending in the eyes of the Leader of the Opposition?

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad he asked, because I have some direct answers. This is how to answer a question.

What is inflationary spending? It is \$90 billion for the wasteful Alto project; \$1 billion for a gun grab that the public safety minister admits will not stop crime; \$20 billion, which is double, for consultants; a 7% increase in the spending on the national bureaucracy; over \$1 billion in handouts to fake and phony refugees; a 100% increase in spending on corporate welfare. It is all inflationary spending.

Will the Liberals stop putting it on the national credit card and get rid of it instead?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even for the Leader of the Opposition, it is pretty hard to say that money that has not been spent yet is inflationary. We have not done it yet, although we will be building high-speed rail as part of our plan to build Canada strong.

Let me keep going down the list. Is the Canada workers benefit inflationary spending? Is it the national school food program? Is it the Canada student loans? What exactly, in the eyes of the Leader of the Opposition, is inflationary spending? Will he—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only is the Prime Minister not getting any relief from the Trump administration with the tariff crisis, but, with tomorrow marking a year since he took office, the situation is worse now than it was at the outset. The way the new U.S. tariffs are calculated is a direct attack on our economy. By taxing all products containing steel or aluminum based on their full value, Washington is disproportionately targeting Quebec and our SMEs. Our workers and businesses do not have time to wait for a saviour.

When will a wage subsidy be introduced to prevent layoffs?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct. We completely disagree with the White House's new interpretation of tariffs. We have held numerous discussions with the manufacturing sector in Quebec and across the country. That is precisely why we will be there to support our business leaders and workers across the country.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister was elected a year ago tomorrow, the situation with

Oral Questions

Donald Trump has not improved. It is getting worse. That is why, tomorrow, the Prime Minister has to make good on the empty promises he has been making for a year now and come to the aid of Quebec's economy. That is why we need a wage subsidy to prevent a wave of layoffs. That is why there needs to be support for our forestry industry in the face of the illegal U.S. tariffs. That is why the idea of EI reform must be revived.

Will the Prime Minister finally rise to the occasion tomorrow?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we know that the Premier of Quebec is in Washington today. Of course we will work with her, knowing that she will stand up for Quebec's businesses and workers. I had the opportunity to speak with her, and so did the Prime Minister. We will be there for our businesses. We already have various ways of supporting our businesses with their investments, but we will do more. It will be our pleasure to work with my colleague to ensure that we stand up for workers in Quebec.

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, jobs must be saved. It is time for Ottawa to recognize how serious the situation is with the new tariff calculation. South Shore Furniture announced this morning that it is closing. This means 126 jobs will be lost in Sainte-Croix and Coaticook. Cyrell AMP in Beloeil has had to raise its prices by 50% because of the tariffs. In Joliette, the small business Liard Industries has to pay five times more in excessive tariffs than before. Everyone in every region is struggling, including ADF in Terrebonne and Max Atlas in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

Will Ottawa announce a wage subsidy tomorrow to prevent layoffs?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in touch with the president of ADF in Terrebonne. I have been in touch with Max Atlas. I have also been in touch with the CEO of BRP. As a result, we have a great deal of information about the reality facing businesses right now. We are well aware that the change in the tariff calculation is having a negative impact on our businesses and our workers. We have been there for Canadians since the tariff war began. We will continue to be there, and we will be there tomorrow as well.

Oral Questions

• (1430)
[English]

FINANCE

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister took office, he pledged to spend less than Justin Trudeau. Instead, he added \$90 billion of net new spending, two-thirds of that on day-to-day operations. Bureaucracy is up 7% and operating costs are up 9%, all higher than his promised savings. He is putting the nation's finances on a credit card and pretending all of that is normal.

Will the Prime Minister commit today that his deficit will not exceed the already excessive \$31 billion Justin Trudeau left behind, or has he simply grabbed Trudeau's credit card and asked for a higher limit?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's leader talks about presence in the House. He has been here for 22 years and has produced nothing.

Let us look at some economic facts: best fiscal position in the G7, second-fastest growing economy in the G7, best net debt-to-GDP in the G7 and wages outpacing inflation.

It is time for that member's leader and that party to stop the bizarre press conferences, stop the podcast tours and help us build Canada strong.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody thought it was possible to outspend Justin Trudeau, but here we are, with the same cast of characters sitting in the exact same seats saying the same thing. The Prime Minister doubled last year's deficit and sent the bill to Canadian kitchen tables: the worst grocery prices, the highest household debt, the worst housing costs in the G7. Those are the actual facts.

When Liberals doubled the debt, they doubled the food bank lineups and they doubled the rent, passing on the balance from the credit card to every Canadian family. Will the Prime Minister stop the credit card budgeting, or does he think Canadians can also just apply for a higher limit?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all across Canada, Canadians have been pulling together to make sure that we build Canada strong. I would challenge the member from the opposite party to ask herself this: Why is she voting against kids getting food in school? Why is she voting against affordable child care? Why does she vote against skilled tradespeople having the opportunity to fill their apprenticeship and actually get those great jobs? Why is she voting against investments in infrastructure, in housing and in water?

It does not matter what solution we propose. Those guys are against Canada and Canadians.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only surplus this Prime Minister knows is the one in his offshore tax haven. The guy literally doubled Trudeau's deficit and gave Canadians the worst food inflation in the G7 and the worst household debt in the G7. Tomorrow, he is going to table another costly credit card bud-

get and put it on the national credit card, all on the backs of Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister end his credit card budgeting so Canadians can finally afford to live?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while they are complaining, this is what we are doing: We are getting things built.

On Friday, we announced the \$4.4-billion expansion of the Sunrise pipeline project, which generates \$3.3 billion in annual GDP. It adds 2,500 construction jobs this summer. It adds \$700 million in tax revenue to B.C. and the federal government to build Canada strong. That is what we are doing.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing these guys have built so far is literally 12 bureaucracies, nothing else. The Prime Minister said he would spend less. A year after that, he has increased bureaucracy, he has increased consultants and he has increased the deficit, all on the national credit card, all on the backs of Canadians.

Once again, will the Liberals end their credit card budgeting so Canadians can finally afford to live?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think he heard me: \$3.3 billion in annual GDP, 2,500 new jobs and \$700 million in new tax revenues. These guys just cannot see something good when it is ready to hit them right between the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of government drives up the cost of living. The more the government spends, the more things cost. Since 2015, the Liberals have doubled the debt while doubling housing costs and food bank lineups. The Prime Minister doubled Justin Trudeau's deficit, proving that he is just another Liberal.

Can he commit that tomorrow's deficit announcement will not be higher than the already reckless, inflationary \$31-billion deficit that Justin Trudeau left behind, yes or no?

• (1435)

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the building trades are in town this week, and I am excited to talk about our plan to build. We are building big, we are building bold and we are building across this country. From B.C. to Newfoundland, we are going to be putting good jobs in the skilled trades using Canadian steel, Canadian lumber and Canadian aluminium. We are building. It is time to invest. When will they get on board? Probably never.

Oral Questions

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government inherited a balanced budget and then spent the last 10 years borrowing, spending, squandering and taxing hundreds of billions of dollars while home ownership slipped out of reach for the middle class and millions more cannot afford groceries. For the last 10 years, Canada should have been building pipelines, houses, ports and roads, but these Liberals built bureaucracies, slush funds and debt repayments.

Again, will the deficit exceed \$31 billion, yes or no?

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the time to invest, and that is what we are doing. We are building big. The Conservatives cannot claim they care about affordability while fighting at every turn. They voted against affordable housing. They voted against child care. They voted against dental care, and they voted against support for families. They cannot have it both ways.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister took office, the projected deficit was \$31 billion. He promised to spend less. Instead, he spent more. He piled on \$90 billion in new spending, not on results but on bigger government. Bureaucracy is up, costs are up and Canadians are paying the price.

Will the Prime Minister commit today that his deficit will not exceed the already outrageous \$31 billion left behind by his predecessor, yes or no?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not business as usual for our economy, so let us stick to the facts. Since September, Canada has created over 94,000 jobs and strong growth right across the country. Canada now has the highest employment rate compared to the United States. This is driven predominantly by women entering the force and joining because of our strong policies. Wages are up by 4.7%, faster than inflation, meaning more Canadians are keeping more of what they earn. That is how we are taking care of Canadians and growing Canada strong.

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[Translation]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources confirmed last week that he wants to invest \$10 billion in government funds in a new dirty oil pipeline, on top of the \$34 billion for the Trans Mountain pipeline. Today, the Liberals are announcing their plans to create a sovereign wealth fund, another gimmick for investing public money in energy and pipelines.

Are there no limits to the amount of debt that the Liberals are prepared to foist on Quebeckers for the benefit of oil and gas companies?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Bloc Québécois claims, we are going to build up all the regions of Canada and all the regions found within Canada. That is why we are taking part in developing our ports, like

Contrecoeur and the Port of Québec, as announced last Friday. We are going to invest in our mines and in our mining sector.

Yes, even against the member for Mirabel's wishes, we are going to invest in regions like the Laurentians, where our four members from the Upper and Lower Laurentians are going to get involved in building technology and diversification—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Repentigny.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are on a catastrophic collision course when it comes to fighting climate change. They are all about “drill, baby, drill”. They just approved Enbridge's Sunrise pipeline, yet another pipeline on top of Trans Mountain, Coastal GasLink and plenty of others. It does not stop there. They even want to build another pipeline in western Canada, on top of Keystone XL. Even the Harper Conservatives did not show such contempt for the fight against climate change, and they do not even believe in climate change.

Are there any environmentally conscious Liberals left? When will they take action?

• (1440)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just got back from the G7 environment ministers' meeting, where I talked to and met with people from around the world. I also spoke about climate change when I was in Berlin for the Petersberg climate dialogue. From what I heard, Canada is seen the world over as a leader when it comes to addressing methane and developing renewable energy projects.

My colleague should be proud of Canada's place in the world. We will continue to fight climate change, and I hope that he will support us in that work.

* * *

FINANCE

Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it makes no difference who the Liberal Prime Minister is. It is always the same old, same old. While this government continues to rack up debt, raise costs and increase taxes, our pensioners are struggling to find decent housing. According to a poll in the week-end paper, more than half of Quebeckers aged 50 and over are afraid they will run out of money in retirement.

When will the Prime Minister stop spending money on our credit card so that our seniors can make ends meet?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now we have seen it all. The Conservatives stand up in the House and claim to defend seniors, yet they lowered the retirement age to 65, which would have left hundreds of thousands of elderly people across the country financially vulnerable. They also opposed the 10% increase in the GIS for those aged 75 and over. It is absolutely mind-boggling to see them stand up and earnestly claim to be defending seniors.

On this side of the House, we will always defend seniors. We will always fight for a strong economy that works for everyone.

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Le Journal de Montréal reported that over half of Quebecers aged 50 and over are worried about running out of money during their retirement. That is what they said. Johanne Boissonnault said that after working her entire life, she now has to get by on \$1,960 a month. As we all know, that is not enough to live with dignity anymore. While the Prime Minister keeps using our credit card to ramp up his deficits, our seniors are paying the price, especially at the grocery store.

When will the Prime Minister put an end to his irresponsible budgets so that Canadians can make ends meet?

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we understand that Canadians are facing all sorts of challenges that are affecting their ability to cope with the cost of living and meet their various obligations. However, this side of the House has solutions that return purchasing power directly back to Canadians and, at the same time, promote job creation so that we are not just reacting in the short term, but making sure we can build Canada over the long term. That is what we are doing, and we would like our colleagues to work with us on that.

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SENIORS

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a lifetime of working, twice as many seniors can no longer afford to retire and have to keep working past age 65 just to make ends meet. That is alarming. The price of everything, including groceries, rent and gas, is going up. Many people now have to count every penny, even after a lifetime of work, and have to find a second career. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister continues to rack up charges on the nation's limitless credit card.

My question is simple. What does the Prime Minister intend to do to truly help our seniors?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, as my colleague said, we lowered the retirement age. Those folks over there wanted to raise it to 65. We are there for seniors. We are there for all Canadians. We are also supporting them through the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which will help 12 million Canadians who need it right now.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the sad reality: More than half of all Quebecers aged 50 and

older are worried about running out of money when they retire. That is what the newspaper Le Journal de Montréal reported this weekend. Our seniors are no longer making ends meet, but the Liberal solution is more debt, higher costs and more taxes.

Canadians are the ones paying the Prime Minister's credit card bills. Our seniors built our country, and this is how we thank them?

My question is simple: Will the Prime Minister stop saddling our seniors with more debt, yes or no?

● (1445)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see the member is all smiles. I must remind him that, according to the International Monetary Fund, Canada has the best fiscal position and the second-fastest growth in the G7.

Now, it is always strange to see the Conservatives claim to be standing up for seniors when they have systematically voted against measures that directly help seniors. I will remind my colleague of one. There are 32,456 people in his riding, including many seniors, who benefit from the Canadian dental care plan, which he opposes. Maybe he should reconsider his values.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to an in-depth feature in Le Journal de Montréal, the Liberal government is letting seniors fall through the cracks. With all the spending on credit in the budget, food inflation is rising much faster than old age security benefits. As a result, seniors are being forced to work at age 68 to pay their mortgage.

While seniors are struggling to make ends meet, the Prime Minister seems more interested in showing off his resumé around the world. When will the Prime Minister decide to get to work on helping Canadian seniors make ends meet?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are there for seniors, in fact. That is why every time we release a new economic announcement, we are thinking about how we can protect them. We were in favour of lowering the retirement age to 65, but my colleague voted against that.

Not only that, but we are there for seniors in various ways, including by fighting food inflation, because it goes without saying that seniors are also affected by food inflation. My colleague is very nice. We have a very good relationship, and I will be pleased to work with him to address our seniors' financial woes.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Jake Sawatzky (New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, premiers and MPs from all stripes agree the Sunrise expansion is a major step forward. It will create good jobs, strengthen Canada's energy security and see 38 first nations acquire equity stakes in the project, advancing economic reconciliation while helping us reach new markets.

Can the minister speak to why this project is so important for Canadians?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Sunrise project is about building Canada stronger. It is about \$4 billion in new investment into our economy. It is about \$3.3 billion in annual GDP. It is about 2,500 new construction jobs starting this summer. As the member said, it is about empowering 38 first nations to participate in economic reconciliation.

This is a win for everyone in Canada.

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FINANCE

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my neighbours in Oshawa are already struggling with the high cost of living, yet the Prime Minister is doubling down on the same old reckless Liberal spending. The deficit has ballooned, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer whom the government silenced has said that two-thirds of new spending is going to day-to-day operations and not real investment. Deficits mean inflation today and higher taxes tomorrow.

Will the Prime Minister stop the costly credit card budgeting and commit to capping this year's deficit at \$31 billion?

Hon. Adam van Koevorden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Conservatives not only do not want to take care of people but also do not understand what an investment is. We are talking about a party that voted against dental care for children and for seniors. The Conservatives are a group of people who voted against supporting kids' just having a healthy lunch in school. We are talking about a party that voted against child care so parents could get back to work earlier and support their family.

The Conservatives prove time and time again that they have no interest in supporting Canadians, and they still do not understand what an investment in Canadians actually means.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know what the state of the country is when Conservatives are asking the Liberal Prime Minister to do as good a job as Trudeau did and to keep the budget down to his level.

Conservatives believe in responsible investment that delivers results for Canadians, not in reckless spending that drives up inflation and taxes. Families in Oshawa are struggling. They are working hard but making tough choices at the grocery store and at the pump. The Liberal government has not made life more affordable for them.

If the Prime Minister truly believes this level of spending is justified, can he explain to families in Oshawa exactly when they will see lowered prices and relief?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives pretend to be champions of affordability, but they never get in the fight. Even worse, they vote against every measure to help families. We cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. They are against it. We build affordable homes. They are against it. We introduce the groceries and food essentials that will put \$1,900 into the pockets of a family of four. They are against it.

We are fighting for jobs and affordability for Canadians. All the Conservatives do is run down the economy in the middle of a trade war. They should get on board and start building.

● (1450)

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there used to be a political consensus in this country that government, like the rest of us, had to live within its means. This was a shared understanding that money does not grow on trees and that eventually all bills come due.

Liberals shattered that consensus, borrowing more money over the past 10 years than every other government in the history of our country combined. The Prime Minister promised to do things differently. Instead he has somehow managed to spend and borrow even more.

When will the Prime Minister end his costly credit card budgets and stop leaving future generations with the bill?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing our Prime Minister was elected to do was to build an economy that is the strongest in the G7. We are going to build that at home and abroad. At home we have cut taxes for 22 million Canadians, we launched a groceries and essentials benefit and we just paused the excise federal tax on gas. Abroad our Prime Minister and our trade minister are signing deals worldwide for billions of dollars to create thousands of jobs.

On this side of the House, we are focused on building the strongest, most resilient economy in the G7.

Oral Questions

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more spending and more debt seems to be the Liberals' solution to every problem they create, forever increasing the size of government and using Canada's credit card to foot the bill. However, all this deficit spending comes with an inflationary cost: the worst grocery inflation in all of the G7, the worst household debt in all of the G7 and the worst housing costs.

When will the Prime Minister realize that more spending, more debt and more government is not the solution to Canada's economic problems? The Liberals are the problem.

Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of building, we are building big. The port of Montreal expansion means over 8,000 construction jobs and over 1,000 permanent jobs. The Darlington nuclear plant means 18,000 good-paying jobs and clean power for generations in Ontario. LNG Canada in B.C. means tens of thousands of jobs in Canadian energy and reaching a new global market.

That means cranes on the ground, paycheques in pockets and Canada building big.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal debt is now over \$1.4 trillion. That means that each Canadian is now paying an average of almost \$2,000 per year in interest on government debt alone. Liberals call that affordability. I thank central bankers.

These deficits are about wealth transfer, nothing less. The more the Liberal government increases the debt, the higher inflation will rise, and lower spending power will result. Canadians pay more and get less.

When will Liberals understand whom they work for, international bankers or the Canadian taxpayer?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is what the central bankers know: Canada has the strongest economy in the G7. We have the highest debt rating of any country in the world.

The Conservatives should learn how to balance books.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues across the way love to talk about how Canada excels. Well, it excels in a few things: the highest housing cost in the G7, the highest food inflation in the G7 and affordability out the window with the Liberal government.

Among G7 countries, we are among the worst as far as our results for Canadians go. A decade of failed Liberal policies has left Canadians falling behind in so many metrics. Fiscal anchors have become optional. Restraint has vanished. The government now is more interested in testing how much it can expand our debt than it is in delivering for Canadians.

When will the Liberals stop overspending and deliver—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will help the member opposite understand what we are good at. We are good at building. How about the Taylor or Gordondale pipeline? How about the NexGen uranium mine? How about the Foran copper mine? How about the

Voisey's Bay mine? How about the Darlington nuclear reactor? How about the new wind farm in Nova Scotia?

We know how to build. The Conservatives know how to complain.

• (1455)

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, despite promising to spend less, the Prime Minister has instead continued the Liberal practice of credit card budgeting. He has added \$90 billion in new spending above the previous levels. This costly approach has left Canada with the worst grocery inflation, the worst household debt, the worst housing crisis and the second-highest unemployment in the G7. The Prime Minister runs up deficits and Canadians are the ones who pay the price.

Will he end his credit card budgeting so Canadians can actually afford to live?

Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that, again, from Saskatchewan's perspective, it has been 10 long years with 14 members. It has been 10 long years, and there is nothing to show for it. We signed the uranium deal with India. Canola sales are improving and moving to China. We are building mines. We are building opportunity. Saskatchewan is finally here in Ottawa.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is right. From the Saskatchewan perspective, it has been a long 10 years. One year ago, this Prime Minister made big promises to Canadians, but the results tell a different story: more spending, more deficit and more pressure on Canadian families just trying to get by. He has more than doubled Trudeau's debt while promising to reduce it at the exact same time.

Why do this Prime Minister's promises never match his results, and when will he rein in this spending?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very odd hearing the Conservatives talk as if somehow we are not talking about Canadians. We are talking about Canadians here. We are talking about their dollars, and we are talking about where they want them invested. We know, loud and clear, that time and time again we have heard from Canadians that they want us to invest in them, and that means things like the groceries and essentials benefit. That means cutting the fuel excise tax. It sounds like they are saying we are putting money into our personal pockets. We are putting money into the pockets of Canadians, and the Conservatives object to that. We really need to make sure they understand how finances work.

Oral Questions

Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I received an email from a resident of Essex who said, "...the Prime Minister stated that life is becoming more affordable.... For many [Essex] residents, it does not feel like affordability has improved." Instead, this Prime Minister has added \$90 billion in new spending, driving up debt, costs and taxes for Canadians. He is just another Liberal.

When will the Prime Minister rein in reckless spending of our taxpayer dollars and take real action to reduce the deficit?

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that member may not know that the International Monetary Fund has actually reaffirmed that Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7. We actually have the second fastest growing economy in the G7. As it relates to the tough decisions government has taken, we have a comprehensive expenditure review that is going to save taxpayers \$40 billion over the next five years.

As it relates to spending, part of the large portion of our spending has actually been on the Canadian Armed Forces. I thought the Conservatives used to stand for investing in the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces. We will stand by them every single day.

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SPORT

Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that mental health and physical health are closely connected. Both are equally important for our well-being, especially for athletes competing at the highest levels. Mental health is key to a balanced life and long-term success in sport.

Can the Secretary of State for Sport update the House on what our government is doing to support the mental health of national team athletes and coaches?

Hon. Adam van Koevorden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Ottawa West—Nepean for always supporting Team Canada. We know that support for our athletes on and off the field is absolutely vital, and that is why we are so proud to be investing \$6.2 million with our Olympic team, Paralympic team and sports networks right across the country to ensure that they have all the resources they need to compete at their best. This investment is going to support exciting programs like Game Plan, and it is going to ensure that our athletes have everything they need on and off the field.

We are so proud of our Team Canada athletes. Go, Canada, go.

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● (1500)

HEALTH

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister's officials revealed that the Liberals spent \$300 million on the PrescribeIT program with nothing to show for it. The Liberals promised that PrescribeIT would replace fax machines for prescription drugs, but now PrescribeIT is being quietly shut down after fewer than 5% of all prescriptions went through the program. No

one can tell Canadians where the money went. Conservatives are calling on the Auditor General to investigate PrescribeIT.

Will the Liberals support an investigation or will they continue their \$300-million cover-up?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the previous government launched the prescription drug program in 2017 following consultations with the provinces and territories, but it was not as successful as anticipated. Rather than continuing to invest in a program that is not delivering results, we decided to end it. The opposition member is well aware of that, and we are working closely with the department to get the information regarding PrescribeIT.

[English]

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals gave \$300 million to Canada Health Infoway for PrescribeIT. The taxpayer-funded CEO, Michael Green, testified at committee that the Canada Health Infoway board terminated PrescribeIT, yet the health minister claimed it was the Liberals. Officials also revealed that the Liberals kept shovelling millions into PrescribeIT even after they knew it was failing. This \$300-million scandal is not adding up.

If the Liberals have nothing to hide, will they support our motion to call the Auditor General in to investigate PrescribeIT?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, PrescribeIT was always intended to become self-funded over time. Rather than putting money toward a program that people were not using, the decision was made to end it. This is how we save taxpayers' money.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve accountability, as \$300 million was spent on PrescribeIT to replace pharmacy fax machines, with nothing to show for it. Liberal obstruction at committee has prevented Canadians from finding out where the money went. That is enough. We need a full investigation.

Will the Minister of Health agree to our call for the non-partisan Auditor General of Canada to investigate this \$300-million boon-dogle?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say that the Ministry of Health is there to support Canadians. I will tell you that challenges like this highlight the need for our connected care for Canadians act, which would break down silos in the health care system.

Oral Questions

I invite you to support Bill S-5, which will be coming to the House very soon.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I would remind the minister that answers must be directed through the Chair.

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[*English*]

SENIORS

Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, older Canadians are some of the most engaged members of the Scarborough—Agincourt community. Whether advocating on affordability issues, volunteering their time or sharing their wisdom, seniors in my community are always there to strengthen the neighbourhood.

Could the Secretary of State for Seniors tell the House how the federal government is helping seniors across Canada with the rising cost of living while also promoting initiatives that keep older Canadians active, connected and thriving in their communities?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for highlighting the incredible contributions that she makes to her community for seniors. I have seen it first-hand.

Just last week, I announced over \$54 million in funding for the new horizons for seniors program, which will go to more than 2,600 grassroots programs across the country benefiting seniors. With this investment, organizations like S.E.A.S. Centre in the member's riding will offer digital literacy workshops and cultural events to promote healthy, active aging. Whether it is building digital skills or organizing community meals, we continue to invest across the country no matter where seniors live.

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● (1505)

TAXATION

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for generations, family farms have fed Canadians and the world. For generations, those farms have been passed from one family member to the next. The Liberals should not be making that harder, but that is where we are.

If a farm is passed to a child, it is tax-deferred. If a farm is passed to another family member, it is fully taxed. The result is that over 57,000 farms have been lost in the last 20 years. That hurts farming families in my community, like Steve Cooper in Uxbridge, who wants to pass his farm to his nephew, but he cannot.

Will the Minister of Finance fix the Income Tax Act and make it easier for families to pass on farms to the next generation?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for generational farming, and we are fully well aware of it. It is something that, through the national policy framework with stakeholders across the country, has been brought up a couple of times. I will have further discussions with the Minister of Finance.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the west coast, commercial fish harvesters, the people actually doing the fishing, are being pushed out. Corporate concentration and growing foreign ownership of licences and quota are driving up costs and draining wealth out of coastal communities. We do not even know who owns much of this quota because there is no public registry. Meanwhile, on the east coast, an owner-operator model protects independent fish harvesters and keeps the value in local communities. It is like we are living in two different countries.

When will the Liberals fix this and bring in a west coast owner-operator model, increase transparency and stop foreign and corporate ownership of our fisheries?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that I support owner-operator models. I am working closely with indigenous partners and all engaged in the fishery on the west coast to co-develop a model that works for the west coast and fits the needs of those engaged in the industry.

It is important that this natural resource remains closely tied to our rural coastal indigenous communities.

[*Translation*]

Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, it is common practice here in the House to ensure that there is an agreement between the whips when documents are to be distributed. That is the first thing.

Second, we are in a country with two official languages, English and French. Unfortunately, to my great surprise as an MP, I found two documents on my desk this morning that were in English only.

These documents were distributed by a Liberal member. Is this standard practice for the Liberal Party or was it an oversight? Could the Speaker tell whoever distributed the documents to comply with the obligation to respect both official languages next time?

The Speaker: Yes, it is our duty to ensure that all materials are distributed in both official languages. I would like to remind all members that they must show consideration for the bilingual nature of this institution.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, as was agreed during question period, I would like to ask for consent to table the list of wasteful Liberal spending that drives up inflation. The \$90 billion for—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I do not think there is any consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 25 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

• (1510)

FINANCIAL CRIMES AGENCY ACT

Hon. Ruby Sahota (for the Minister Finance and National Revenue) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, An Act to establish the Financial Crimes Agency and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts and regulations.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I would be honoured to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I move that the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

OJIBWAY NATIONAL URBAN PARK

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I get to the petition at hand, I would like to wish a very happy birthday to my son, Rohan, who celebrated his birthday this weekend. I would also like to send birthday wishes in advance to my daughter, Aviana, whose birthday is in July, as we will not be in session.

As we serve in the House, I am reminded that everything we do is for the future of our children. I am incredibly proud of my children. They impress me every day with their kindness, strength and promise of a hopeful future. To my wife Michelle, the heart of our family, I wish her a very happy Mother's Day, well in advance. I thank her for all that she does for us.

The petition I have is from the good friends and folks of Windsor West. First of all, they would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for

Routine Proceedings

your strong support in the previous Parliament for Bill C-248. While that bill did not make it across the finish line due to prorogation, the hard work behind it and the voices of people—

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe we are on petitions, not members' statements. I acknowledge what the member said, but I think we should get on to the petitions.

Harb Gill: Mr. Speaker, the good people of Windsor West would like to thank you for your strong support in the previous Parliament for Bill C-248. While that bill did not make it across the finish line—

The Speaker: The petitioners want to thank me?

An hon. member: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: I guess we cannot argue with that.

I would ask the member to move it along and just summarize his petition.

Harb Gill: Mr. Speaker, they appreciate your support.

This petition has been signed by Canadians from Windsor and across the country. It is calling for strong, lasting protections for national urban parks, including the Ojibway Prairie Complex. The petitioners recognize Canada's commitment to establishing up to 15 national urban parks by 2030, including one in Windsor.

The petitions know that Ojibway is not just a green space, but one of the most unique and fragile ecosystems in the country, home to species at risk and deeply tied to our local identity. They are asking for clear science-based boundaries and a strong legislative framework that puts ecological integrity first. Once these lands are lost, they are lost for good. They are also calling for the meaningful participation of indigenous nations alongside local communities in protecting and stewarding these lands for generations to come.

For the people of Windsor, this is not just about policy, it is about legacy. It is about making sure our kids and grandkids inherit something—

• (1515)

The Speaker: Is that in the petition as well? We will move on.

MENTAL HEALTH

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition on behalf of my constituents.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners highlight that the threat of wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters is on the rise as a result of climate change; that mass casualty events, including the 2018 Fredericton shooting and the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster, leave scars on their communities for years afterward; that evacuations, property loss, grief and uncertainty resulting from emergencies have shown to have lasting impacts on mental health and can exasperate mental illness; that, in November 2025, a grizzly attack on a school field near Bella Coola in British Columbia severely injured students and a staff member, leaving students and families in the wider Nuxalk community coping with ongoing trauma, which highlights the need for accessible mental health supports in remote communities; that Australia, New Zealand and the United States have introduced federal frameworks for addressing mental health following large-scale emergencies; and that the federal government is involved in emergency management, often in collaboration with provincial, territorial and indigenous governments.

The petitioners call on the federal government to support Motion No. 20 and work with provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, labour unions and other stakeholders to develop and implement a national strategy for addressing the mental health impacts of emergencies, including those arising from natural disasters and mass casualty events.

PACIFIC SALMON

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present several petitions today on behalf of British Columbians and my constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford regarding the salmon allocation policy. Petitioners note that the proposed changes by the government, which could compromise recreational access to coho and chinook, could undermine cultural sensitivities and the long-standing traditions of British Columbians who just want to fish with their families and eat healthy wild salmon.

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from very concerned people in the Indian Head area who are expressing their outrage and their opposition to the Liberal decision to close down the Indian Head agricultural research farm. This farm has provided invaluable research for the agricultural sector so many farmers could have access to better crop varieties and better soil management. There have been all kinds of benefits from the research that has happened there, and the Liberals are shutting this research centre down.

The petitioners are calling on the government to reverse this decision so that farmers can continue to benefit from the world-class research done there. This is not just about the jobs that are being lost in the Indian Head community. It is about the broader impact on the entire agricultural sector from across the country. If the government is serious about food security and innovation research, it will reverse course. That is what these petitioners are calling for.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise, as it always is, on behalf of the wonderful individuals and parishioners of St. Margaret's Parish in Midland, Ontario, many of whom I hold dearly. These petitioners are concerned with the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those whose sole

underlying illness is mental illness. They are encouraging the government and Canadians to support those living with mental illness with supports as opposed to offering them MAID and encourage all legislators in the House and the government to support Bill C-218.

FARMLAND IN CLEARVIEW TOWNSHIP

Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the great residents of Simcoe—Grey and, more specifically, the township of Clearview. The Department of National Defence has purchased 700 acres of prime agricultural land to build an over-the-horizon radar system. The residents there are stressed and concerned. In order to do phase two, the department needs up to another 3,000 acres to make the radar run at its peak performance, so petitioners are worried that the government might expropriate. There are concerns over the environment as well. This property is beside the Minesing Wetlands.

Between food security and environmental issues, there are great concerns, so the petitioners are calling on the government to stop the building of the over-the-horizon site on this already purchased property, to prevent future acquisition of the prime farmland of the township of Clearview and to register the previously purchased property with the Ontario Farmland Trust to preserve its agricultural status.

* * *

● (1520)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953 and 954 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would then ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[For text of questions and responses, see *Written Questions website*]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9—CHANGES TO THE STANDING ORDERS

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

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to finish the second half of my speech concerning Motion No. 9.

As I mentioned earlier, the Liberals view the House not as a House of Parliament, it seems, but more as a theatre for themselves, where they tolerate no criticism and all they expect from people in the House are gratitude and cheers for their empty, performative politics. They very much live by Jean Chrétien's attitude of "It's called question period, not answer period."

There is a former Liberal MP from the House named John Stewart, who actually went on to the other place to be a senator. This is not the Jon Stewart whom the current Prime Minister loves so much. Senator Stewart stated about proceedings in the House, "slipping things through the house may seem smart in the short run. In the long run it works to discredit both the government and parliament." I could not agree more, and Motion No. 9 discredits both Parliament and the government.

I am going to go over a couple of examples of how oversight has exposed some of the corruption, some of the issues, with the current government.

In the 42nd Parliament, when I was first elected, Liberals, when they had a majority with the current government House leader as their lead on the operations committee, brought through what was called the "vote 40 slush fund". This was a \$15-billion slush fund set by the government, which presented it with no backing of what the money would be spent on.

Again, I go back to King Edward when he formed the Model Parliament in 1295 and said, "what touches all should be approved by all". The government seems to think that what touches all should be just approved by the Liberal government. The slush fund was \$15 billion. When we asked one of the Liberal officials what the money was for, he said that it was presumptuous that the government would explain to Parliament what that \$15 billion was for before we approved the spending.

Vote 10 of the Treasury Board is normally about \$200 million or \$300 million. In the 42nd Parliament, under a majority, the government ran that up to \$1 billion a year. For decades, it had been in the low ten millions, 20 millions or 30 millions of dollars. The government moved it up to \$1 billion a year. It rammed it through because it had a majority. What happened in 2019 when the Liberals lost the majority? They backed away from the vote 40 slush fund, and it has not raised its ugly head again.

In the operations committee, we were able to expose the Arrive-Can scam that the government desperately tried to cover up. People remember that the Liberals tried to say that it was a life-saving measure and that it cost only a few million dollars, but of course, it cost well above \$60 million.

Government Orders

There was the GC Strategies scandal, in which two people working out of the basement of a house racked up \$15 million, \$20 million or \$30 million in billing to taxpayers. With McKinsey & Company, another one, \$120 million from the government was paying off its friends and insiders. We were able to expose that because we had an ability to keep the committee going and not be shut down by the government. Billions of dollars was spent by the government on management consultants at the same time as the Privy Council came to us and said that actually there were people within the government who could do the work, but it was still going out to McKinsey and other management companies to spread Canadian taxes around.

Of course, there was the millions of dollars spent on the New York consul general's apartment on Billionaire's Row. The government desperately tried to shut that down. We were able to expose the spending because we had the ability, and they did not have the Liberal numbers to shut it down.

In the public accounts committee, on which I sat, there was the issue of green slush fund, which of course had been approved by the then industry minister, who is now the finance minister. There was the Trudeau Foundation scandal. We were able to force ministers to actually show up. Of course in ethics, there was the WE scandal and there was showing the current Prime Minister and his conflicts. There was also the "other Randy" issue.

I want to finish with a couple of quotes from Lester Pearson and John Diefenbaker. Pearson said he recognized that the health of Parliament has to rely on the opposition's "right to oppose, attack and criticize". Diefenbaker said, "freedom always dies when criticism ends." That is what Motion No. 9 is about: ending the criticism of the government. Again, the Liberals want solely an audience, not an opposition to stand up for taxpayers.

• (1525)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we should be looking at the motion for what it is. It is very straightforward.

For majority governments, there is parliamentary tradition, not only here in Canada but also outside it in the Commonwealth. If a majority of membership makes up the House of Commons, a majority of membership makes up our standing committees. There is a very good reason for it. There is no reason for us to go against a tradition that has actually been very effective for Canada as a nation for generations, and I would hope the Conservatives see the value of it. I am sure that if the shoe were on the other foot, they would probably see the value in it.

Does the member not believe that we should be following parliamentary tradition?

Government Orders

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I would like the government to respect the parliamentary tradition of “what touches all should be approved by all”. Again, I keep going back to the original Model Parliament's being called. The very point of having a Parliament is approving such things. The member opposite voted in favour of the vote 40 slush fund. He voted in favour of taxpayers' money continuing to go out the door without oversight or approval of Parliament, violating the very reason Parliament exists and violating the very reason the Westminster system exists.

If the member opposite wants to follow a parliamentary tradition, he should follow the one originally set by King Edward: “what touches all should be approved by all”.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised to hear the member for Winnipeg North refer to parliamentary tradition when asking my Conservative colleague whether he thinks we should follow parliamentary tradition. My colleague just answered the question, but I find that quite rich considering that parliamentary tradition would require, say, that the composition of committees follow the composition of the results of the general election that kicked off the current legislature.

I would like to ask my colleague something. Does he think that our Liberal colleagues have fallen for the spin, as we say in proper political parlance? Did they drink the mystery Kool-Aid and now genuinely believe that the Liberal government's current actions respect parliamentary tradition regarding the composition of committees?

[*English*]

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc is right. The Liberal members want to respect parliamentary tradition when it benefits them. Anything else they throw in the garbage, along with any sense of accountability, oversight or transparency. That is a Liberal government. The Liberals like parliamentary tradition if it suits them. If not, they dispense with it.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I find today's debate rather odd. Just a few days ago, by-elections were held in three ridings, one in Quebec and two others in the Toronto area. The next day, the Prime Minister said that he would continue to work with the opposition because that is what Quebecers and Canadians wanted.

What is happening today is the exact opposite of that. We are concerned about increased arrogance and contempt for the parliamentary process and the workings of Parliament, which require an opposition that makes its voice heard and that, when necessary, works with a government that is willing to listen, take into account the concerns raised by the opposition and address them. Let us be clear: The 343 members of the House represent citizens who have a right to be heard.

To follow up on what my colleague just said in answer to my previous question, I would like to know what he thinks of this approach. Is he also concerned about the approach we are beginning to see from this Liberal government?

• (1530)

[*English*]

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he was going to do politics differently. It is clear that he is not. His politics are like the empty, performative politics of every member of the past Trudeau government and the current government. They are just empty, performative politics that suit the Liberal Party and serve the Liberal Party but do not suit Parliament and do not serve democracy or accountability.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today because what we are witnessing is not just another procedural move in the House. It is something deeper and far more concerning. For the past number of months, we have watched a pattern unfold that points to the reality of our democracy and its being under pressure, yet Canadians are not hearing about it.

It is not leading in the national news, and it is certainly not being examined with the seriousness it deserves. Instead, Canadians are being told a different story. They are being told that everything is normal and that this is politics as usual, but it is not. By-elections have been framed as sweeping wins for the government, as validation of a majority, but that all those by-elections did was keep the main election results the same.

The majority was secured through active recruitment of opposition members. Canadians elected balance and accountability, and what they are getting instead is a slow erosion of that balance, happening right now in front of them. It is not being resisted by the very institutions that should be asking the hardest questions: How was the majority actually secured, how did we get here and why are the Liberals actively recruiting members of the opposition for power?

Inside the House we know exactly what this means. Committees are where accountability happens. It is where the government is tested. Now, through a series of calculated moves, the government is trying to control them. It does not stop there. This majority was secured through the active recruitment of opposition members, members who were elected under one banner, by voters who trusted them to represent a certain set of values and are now being drawn into another. Where is the scrutiny? Where are the questions from the media asking why this is happening?

Instead, too often the narrative shifts. The focus turns to blaming Conservatives for raising concerns rather than to examining the actions these concerns created in the first place. Even more concerning is what we have heard from some of the members who have crossed the floor. Most avoid speaking openly about it at all, but one openly admitted discomfort with the democratic process itself, specifically with the election of the Deputy Speaker. Crossing the floor became, in part, a response to that frustration.

Government Orders

Let us think about that: a dissatisfaction with democracy, followed by a decision that helps consolidate power in the hands of the government. It is a complete dumpster fire. That should concern every single member of the House, regardless of party.

I want to make this real for Canadians. Over the past months, opposition members have come forward to say they have been approached; conversations have happened behind closed doors; pressure, subtle or otherwise, has been applied; and Canadians have not heard about it. These are not rumours. These are conversations taking place behind the scenes, away from public view and away from accountability.

I can tell the House that I was one of those members who was approached. I was asked to cross the floor. I was asked to leave behind the people of Kitchener Centre who had elected me as a Conservative, in exchange for aligning myself with the government. That matters, because when elected representatives are quietly courted to change sides, when the balance of Parliament is being reshaped through backroom conversations, we are no longer operating in the spirit of the democratic mandate Canadians gave us.

This is not just about me. It is about the people I represent. Kitchener Centre is not just any riding; it is Canada's innovation capital. It is one of the most dynamic regions in the country, a hub for innovation, arts, culture and creativity. It is a place where start-ups are built, where entrepreneurs take risks and where the future of Canada's economy is being shaped every single day.

The people in my community understand systems, incentives and when something does not add up. When they see a government attempting to reshape Parliament, not through voters but through recruitment, they recognize it for what it is. I want to speak directly to them for a moment. They deserve transparency, accountability and a government that reflects the choices they made at the ballot box.

Right now, what is being left out is scrutiny. Recruitment that deserves attention is not being covered. Patterns that raise questions are being dismissed. Democracy does not function on silence. It depends on transparency and on the willingness to ask the hard questions, even when the answers are uncomfortable.

That brings us back to the motion before us. What we are seeing is a government that is not content with the mandate it was given, a government that is looking to expand its power not through democracy or the will of Canadians but through procedural control.

• (1535)

That is the reality, and it raises a simple but important question. If the roles were reversed, would Conservatives reshuffle committees if we had a majority government? The answer is yes, but that is what Canadians would have voted for. However, we are missing one important question here. If we were elected in a minority Parliament, would we go against the voters, recruit members from other parties and manufacture a majority that Canadians never approved? The answer to that is no, because we believe the mandate given by Canadians matters. We believe the balance they choose should be respected. We believe accountability is not something to be avoided, but something to be upheld.

This is bigger than one motion. It is about whether we accept a path where power is quietly consolidated, scrutiny and opposition are weakened and the voices of Canadians are overwritten. It is about whether we stand up and say that our democracy is worth protecting and that the choices Canadians make matter.

Canadians are not asking for perfection from their government, but they are asking for honesty. They are asking for a system that reflects their vote, not one that works around it. When trust in that system starts to erode, it is not easily rebuilt.

What we are debating today may seem procedural to some, but Canadians understand fairness when they see it, and they understand when something crosses the line. Changing the rules after the fact, reshaping Parliament to avoid scrutiny, is not fairness. It is a shift away from the very principles that hold this place together. If we allow that shift to go unchallenged, we set a precedent not just for the government but for everyone to follow.

This moment matters. This is why we are speaking up and not backing down. No government, regardless of party, should be able to rewrite Canadians' choices. Conservatives will continue to stand against this, to call it out and to uphold a Parliament that reflects the will of the people, not the ambitions of power. This country and the democracy that defines it are worth protecting.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will be the one-year anniversary of the last federal election. Canadians responded very favourably to our new Prime Minister when he talked about working together as a team to build a stronger, healthier Canada that is strong for all and looking for collaboration, for people to work with. If we have individuals who want to be a part of that team, I see that as a positive. Yes, we got a majority through three by-elections where a majority of Canadians voted for those three candidates.

Having said that, the very substance of the motion we are dealing with today is to have a majority, as we have in the House, in our standing committees. That is a parliamentary tradition. Does the member support parliamentary tradition?

Kelly DeRidder: Mr. Speaker, yes, a year ago Canadians elected a minority Liberal government that promised it would be collaborative with the members of the opposition and make changes in a collaborative manner. What we are seeing now is another broken promise from the Prime Minister because in no way is it collaborative to stack committees so that we cannot hold the government to account and be able to properly scrutinize legislation.

Not only is that a power grab, ensuring it is stacking the committees. The government would have the majority with one additional member, but instead of going with that, it wants two to really ensure that our voices are—

Government Orders

• (1540)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Simcoe—Grey.

Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her passionate speech about democracy.

I can tell members I had the opportunity on the weekend to attend the 50th anniversary of Wendy and Larry Long of Clearview Township. I congratulate them on 50 years.

The common question was about floor crossers. People are concerned, are upset and have lost faith in politicians. The other part the Liberals are now talking about is committees.

Does my colleague find when she is in her riding that the trust in politicians has really gone down in the last couple of weeks because of what the Liberals have been doing here?

Kelly DeRidder: Yes, Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I am seeing an erosion of trust in Parliament with what is happening here, with not only the floor crossings that have happened but also this reshuffling of committees. Canadians do not understand why this decision is being made, especially in my riding, because we need to maintain the balance to ensure we can properly hold the government to account.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on her speech. I also commend her on remaining, at least so far, true to her convictions and not crossing the floor, unlike many other members of Parliament.

As far as today's motion is concerned, I have noticed in committee that the Liberals have been blocking our work for the past two weeks. They have been filibustering. That is the term that is often used. They are doing everything they can to prevent votes from being held and to disrupt the proceedings. Now, we are considering a motion that specifically aims to unilaterally change the composition of the committees.

Rather than being motivated by a desire for co-operation, as mentioned by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the Prime Minister, we wonder whether this motion might instead be motivated by a desire to take control and operate in an authoritarian manner, as we are seeing with the closure motion.

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc member is absolutely right that this is a way to shut down committees. Currently, filibustering is being used to make sure we are not able to put our motions forward, but another thing that is going to happen that Canadians are unaware of is that a motion can be put forward by the Liberals to go in camera, and it is going to stifle our conversations even more.

I would like Canadians, when they watch committees, to note how many times this happens moving forward.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have heard publicly that the member was specifically courted and that there was an attempt to recruit her to cross

the floor. I wonder if she could expand on that and confirm whether it is true. It is the first time I have heard it, and it is indeed shocking because we have been assured by the government benches that they never tried to recruit anyone.

Kelly DeRidder: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is true. I can confirm here today that they actively tried to recruit me to cross the floor, and my answer was unequivocally no.

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, again, when we debate motions under time allocation, we cannot exactly say that it makes us—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the hon. Secretary of State for Combatting Crime is rising on a point of order.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that Thursday, April 30, shall be an allotted day.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I was about to raise a point of order when my colleague stood up.

I would like members to show some respect for those who are speaking. There is a very loud conversation happening near the Speaker's chair, and even I am having a hard time hearing my colleague from Saint-Jean. We would appreciate it if members could remain calm and maintain proper decorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for Drummond for his comments. Yes, we do need to be a little quieter in the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

* * *

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9—CHANGES TO THE STANDING ORDERS

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

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we may be asking for quiet, but we are not asking for members to be muzzled and, unfortunately, that is exactly what I will be talking about today. When members take the floor, we tend to say that we are pleased to rise, but that is always a little less true when the government has just announced a gag order or closure motion on a bill or motion. Unfortunately, that is what is happening again today. It seems as though this will not be the last time, and that is the problem.

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We are here today to talk about the composition of committees. That may seem rather innocuous and it may not be of interest to those watching at home. As my predecessor would say, no one is going to come to blows on buses about how many members from which party will serve on committee, but this is a sign of a deeper problem, which we are going to talk about today. I will come back to that. Most importantly, this is being done rather quickly. In just seven days, we went from the government promising to work with the parties after it secured a majority in the April 13 by-elections to a unilateral approach in which the government is refusing to engage in discussions, despite the customs and practices of the House. This has not been discussed or raised in the House, and now the government wants to impose a gag order just to make sure that the House has been sufficiently steamrollered.

So the first thing the government is doing with its majority is shutting down debate in the House on something that is at the very heart of parliamentary democracy, namely committee work. The government made a nice promise to collaborate, so we might as well remind the government of that promise. The day after the by-elections, the Prime Minister said that the government would listen to all voices in Parliament and promised to work collaboratively. He said, "The work ahead demands collaboration, partnership, and ambition to deliver at the speed and scale Canadians are counting on."

As I was saying, unfortunately, the government is breaking with a parliamentary tradition that has always existed when it comes to the composition of committees. We are in a unique situation, and we acknowledge that. This is the first time that a government has gone from a minority to a majority midway through a Parliament. The usual procedure for the composition of committees is already set out in the Standing Orders. The parties determine by consensus how the committees could reflect the situation in Parliament. If there is a majority in the House, it makes sense for committees to have a majority as well. If there is no majority in the House, it makes sense that committees should not have a majority either and should reflect roughly the same percentage of representation as in the House. In addition, this is usually done collaboratively.

In fact, chapter 20 of the new manual we received says, "Party representation on committees reflects the standings of recognized parties in the House, and each recognized party determines which of its members will represent it on a committee." It also says that, by convention, the parties meet, discuss, negotiate and agree on the wording of a motion adopted subsequently through a report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Most of the time, this report is adopted by unanimous consent. That just goes to show how committees have always been set up in a spirit of collaboration and consensus. However, we are now in a situation where, just a week after promising to collaborate, the government is imposing its approach on us.

The government is telling us that committees must reflect party standings in the House and that we must therefore ensure that we have roughly the same percentage. We agree with the principle that committees should reflect party standings in the House, but we do not agree with the way the government acquired its majority, particularly by way of floor crossers. Having said that, it would serve no purpose for us to deny the current reality that the House now has a

majority. From there, what should a parliamentary committee that is proportional to the House look like?

• (1545)

The government is proposing to add not just one but two Liberal members to every committee. We are going from committees that are mainly made up of 10 people, with five Liberals, four Conservatives and one Bloc member, to committees made up of 12 people, with seven Liberals, four Conservatives and one Bloc member. That would give the Liberals what we call a supermajority in committee. This morning, I heard the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons saying that there is no such thing as a supermajority in the House and that supermajority is an American term. However, the fact is that what the government is proposing does not reflect the composition of the House.

I want to do a little math, and I hope that members will be able to follow what I am saying. After the general election, at the very beginning of this Parliament, the Liberals held 169 of the 338 seats in the House, or about 50%. At that time, they also held five out of the 10 seats in committee, or about 50%, which was relatively proportional. The Conservatives held 144 of the 338 seats in the House, or about 42% or 43%. They held four out of the 10 seats in committee, or about 40%, which is quite close. The Bloc Québécois held 22 seats in the House, or about 6.5%. That meant that we should have had 0.6 members in committee, but since that is obviously impossible, our representation was rounded up to 10% or one committee member. However, all of this was still relatively proportional.

What the Liberals are proposing here is that committees have 12 members. Let us do the math again. Let us say we want each party to have the same percentage of seats it currently holds and committees are made up of 12 members. Let us start with today's standings. There are currently 174 Liberal members, out of a total of 343, which is about 52% of the seats in the House. The Conservatives have 140 seats, so they represent about 40%. The Bloc Québécois has not changed much, and our percentage is 6.5%.

Let us look at it from the opposite angle. Let us say that the committees will now have 12 members and that we want to maintain the same percentage of representation. Let us do the math. The Liberals have 174 members, and let us multiply that by 12 and divide it by 343. That comes out to 6.12 members. If we round that off, we end up with six Liberals per committee. Let us do the same calculation with the Conservatives. The Conservatives have 140 seats, so let us multiply that by 12 and divide it by 343. That comes out to 4.79 members. Let us round that number up. That means five Conservative members on each committee. Let us do the same with the Bloc Québécois. If we multiply 22 by 12 and divide it by 343, that comes out to 0.78 members. Once again, let us round that up. Here is what it would look like in a scenario with 12-member committees: six Liberals, five Conservatives and one Bloc Québécois member. The problem is that this does not give them a majority on the committee. Based on the Liberals' proposal, if they really wanted a committee of 12 members, that is the composition they should have had.

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In that case, why not have a committee made up of 11 members? If there were six Liberals, four Conservatives and one Bloc member, we would be much closer to the parties' standings in the House. Using the same principle that the Liberals are defending tooth and nail to justify making changes to the Standing Orders, we would be much closer to reality. However, the government is saying that this would mean that, once in a while, the chair of each committee would have to break a tie.

The government cannot have it both ways. In a context where the government has a majority, albeit a slim one, the least it could do is not be so arrogant, which it was even back when it was a minority government. The least it could do is not resort to the extremes of arrogance by changing the makeup of committees and saying that it will continue to collaborate, as it promised to do. If the government wants to avoid having committee chairs cast a tie-breaking vote, then it should talk to the opposition parties, like the Bloc Québécois, to avoid situations where a committee chair would have to break a tie.

• (1550)

If a committee chair ever has to do that, well, so be it—that is their job. They earn an extra \$10,000 a year to run the committee, and voting in committee is part of their duties as an MP. Is it really the end of the world? In any case, we were unable to have this discussion, because the Liberals decided to go it alone, without consulting the opposition parties, without contacting them to seek their views or suggestions on the various options for forming committees, once again disregarding the established tradition regarding how committees are formed.

The Liberals argued that they did not want to contact the opposition because the Conservatives had already made it clear in the media that they disagreed with the idea of overhauling committees. I think it is fairly common knowledge that discussions between the parties in the House do not take place in the media. It would therefore have been entirely justified to continue the discussion with various colleagues to see if we could reach an agreement that would have led to a better understanding.

I have another point: When the government decides that a majority is necessary in committee, there are often two reasons.

The first is to avoid obstruction and filibustering, a tool available to the opposition parties in cases where they feel disgruntled over *x*, *y* or *z*. Is that a valid argument in light of Parliament's current situation? The answer is no.

Dilatory motions, which are used to slow the work of certain committees, are currently being used in two committees: the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities and the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. However, that is Liberal obstruction: The Liberals are the ones slowing the committees' work because members of the opposition want to do their job, in other words, get information.

In the case of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities, the opposition has requested documents proving the profitability of the Contrecoeur project. The government tells us it is a very good project. That is great, but let it show

us the numbers. It must have them, if it can tell us that it is a good project. The opposition is asking for them, but what are the Liberals doing? They are blocking the committee's work. The other place where we are seeing obstruction right now is the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. That is because the opposition is asking for figures on cost overruns related to, among other things, the Cúram software, the Phoenix software and the ArriveCAN app. The opposition wants to know what happened. It wants the government to be accountable, but the government is obstructing the process to avoid accountability. Again, these are the only two committees where obstruction is happening.

The other argument we keep hearing for why a majority is absolutely necessary on committees is that committees are the place where bills end up when we have to debate them clause by clause, propose amendments and move the work forward once they have been through the House. According to the Liberals, since they have a majority in the House at second reading and can refer bills to committee, they should have a majority on committees so that bills do not get stalled in committee.

However, that argument is also pretty odd, because we took the time to run the numbers. We went over every Parliament and looked at how many bills made it through. I have time; I can pull out a few numbers. In the 41st Parliament from 2011 to 2013, 58% of bills passed the committee stage and made it to third reading or the Senate, for example. From 2013 to 2015, that proportion rose to 74%, which is quite high. From 2015 to 2019, under a Liberal majority government, it was 50%. That is not a great success rate when it comes to passing bills, and yet the Liberals had a majority and therefore could not argue that bills were being stalled in committee.

More recently, for our purposes, prior to the 2019-20 prorogation, the rate was 63%, which is not so bad. After prorogation, in 2020-21, the rate was 60%. During the last Parliament, the rate was 53%. Then, surprise, surprise, although many bills have been introduced recently and have not been debated in the House yet—and which we included in our analysis among those that have not gotten through yet—we still end up with a rate of 65% of bills that have gone through committee. In short, the argument that committees block legislation is particularly misleading.

• (1555)

Since there are no issues with getting bills through committee and since there are no issues with filibustering and obstruction other than the government's own, the argument that we need to have a Parliament that works rings completely false. It is all the more absurd as a reason for not contacting the opposition parties to discuss what could have been done about committees.

Another concern I have about the composition of committees is that this requires a notice of motion from the government: Proposing a new committee composition takes a notice of motion from the government. As I have said before, the government's majority is shaky.

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We should not be surprised—not now, since the honeymoon still seems to be going on, but in a few months' time—if certain members of the Liberal caucus, such as the more progressive or greener members, start getting fed up, feeling that they no longer have a place in this government, and decide to leave. Some are physically closer to the door than others. They might be interested in taking one step more. The member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie and a few others might be slowly inching their way to the door, physically and perhaps mentally as well.

If the government were to lose its majority along the way, what would happen to the composition of committees? That is an excellent question, which, incidentally, was put to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. He told us that the opposition parties could use an opposition day to demand that the committees revert to their previous makeup. We then asked him if he would listen to the opinion of the House if such a request were made.

The government is forcing the opposition parties to waste one of their opposition days doing the work it does not want to do itself, all in order to uphold the sacrosanct notion of proportional representation on House committees. It is putting pressure on the opposition parties and, what is more, it is paying lip service to the idea that it might consider the opposition parties' views. However, the way it has treated our views so far—even just in terms of adopting this motion—speaks volumes about what we can expect from it going forward.

I will conclude on this point. As I said in my opening remarks, no one is going to come to blows on buses about what we are discussing here. The composition of the House committees is something that is primarily our concern. I do, however, see this as a warning to the general public: What we are seeing now is the beginning of what could become a period of Liberal arrogance that will continue for years to come—perhaps as much as three years. It is not just the opposition parties that will bear the brunt of this.

If I were a lobbying group, or if I were the government of one of the provinces or of Quebec, and I heard in the future that the government wanted to collaborate with me, honestly, I would have serious doubts. Without additional guarantees, I would not dare to hope for anything. I would never allow myself to hope that collaboration with the current Liberal government would materialize, unless Canada and Quebec were two separate countries and were speaking to each other as equals.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to the real basic here. If there is a majority makeup on the floor of the House of Commons, our rules, tradition and heritage, not only in Canada, but in the Commonwealth, are that there is a majority on the committees.

I would like to pick up on the point that the member made in regard to reducing committee membership if the government did not have a majority. Can members imagine if we had won with 172 seats and someone crossed the floor over to the opposition so it would no longer be a majority? I would be fairly confident that the unholy coalition between the Bloc and the Conservatives would get

rid of the majority on the committees, and they would have a valid argument to do so.

I think there is a double standard that the opposition today is trying to apply.

A majority in the House means a majority on committees. Does she not agree with that principle?

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I get the impression that the parliamentary secretary spent my entire speech not actually listening to me. I said it once, I said it again, I have repeated it ad nauseam: We do not agree with how they scraped together their majority, but the fact remains that the government has a majority, and, as we have said repeatedly, the composition of the committees must reflect that.

We disagree primarily because there was no consultation, contrary to the House's century-old tradition regarding committee composition. Furthermore, we disagree with the formula the Liberals are using, since they are claiming a share that is ultimately not as proportional as it would have been if it had been “6-4-1”, for example. Other possibilities, other alternatives and other options could have been discussed with the opposition parties, which would likely have been eager to make their voices heard, including regarding the prospect of a reversal if the government were to lose its majority.

• (1605)

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague. I completely agreed with everything, or almost everything, she said. In fact, I was in agreement up until the last sentence. Unfortunately, I was left unsatisfied, although I was hanging on to her every word, but still.

I think our colleague described the situation very well. Indeed, there is a difference between winning a majority through votes and winning a majority through floor crossers. That is unheard of in our parliamentary history. For this reason, when we are in a new Parliament, and we should call it like it is, the government must ensure that the opposition parties are consulted in a timely manner in order to reach such an agreement.

My question for my colleague is this: Why did the government fail to act respectfully in order to show respect to the opposition parties?

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back in time. Members will recall that a lot of new laws were created at one point in this Parliament, during COVID-19. During COVID-19, we had to make a lot of changes to how we did things, particularly to allow members to speak away from their seats, to allow online voting, to start implementing certain things. It faded a bit once there was a Liberal-NDP majority, but at the very beginning, there was a willingness to work together. That is what underpins democracy when it comes to creating new laws, as long as there is consensus, and that is how it was done.

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The fact that, in a context of new laws, the government has decided quickly and without any consultation to do things as it sees fit is an example of the arrogance we can expect in the future, even though it might not have been necessary to act that way at all.

The Bloc Québécois has always proven that it is the adult in the room, that it can speak. Our proposals, the ones I made during my speech, were reasonable. That was a missed opportunity for the government to show that it can do something useful and work fairly.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am in awe of our leader's oratorical skills. She always finds the right words and has a very clear way of explaining the issues to us. Once again, her speech was constructive, with proposals and arguments explaining why the government's current proposal regarding the makeup of committees is unacceptable.

This is not the first time the Liberal government has broken custom and tradition by significantly changing the rules. The Liberals did that with the Trudeau government. They took advantage of their alliance with the NDP to act like a majority and make significant changes to the Standing Orders. They are at it again today.

Can our House leader explain to me what Quebeckers and Canadians have to lose because of the approach taken by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who is acting like the government's "bad cop"?

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon for her excellent question. I really enjoy listening to her in the House as well. It is okay to praise one another from time to time.

I get the feeling that, unfortunately, one of the things we will be doing the most in the coming weeks is praising one another because we will unfortunately have a much harder time holding the government to account. We can see it in the Liberals' attitude. Yes, there are committees where the government is quick to try to refuse requests for studies from the opposition parties and requests for documents on the pretext that it can do whatever it wants since it now has a majority. Just because someone can do something does not mean that is the right thing to do. We will certainly see examples of that in the future.

This shows the kind of approach that is on the horizon. It also makes clear that transparency is not really the Liberals' cup of tea. More and more, we are seeing a host of agencies that keep decision-making out of the public eye. We know the government is pulling the strings behind the scenes, but as soon as accountability comes into play, we are not supposed to ask questions under the pretext that it is an independent agency. That is part of the current government's attitude. Ultimately, it is the citizens who will lose out.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for her excellent speech. I completely agree with her. She raised some points and shared new figures. Well, they were new to me, at least. The member showed that the committees are not an obstacle to progress here in the House. I thank her for that.

Was there anything else my colleague wanted to add?

• (1610)

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to talk a little more about how I see things. The government seems to want to change the composition of committees not in response to a past problem but rather because it wants to anticipate future problems it might encounter. It wants to give itself all the flexibility it needs to ram bills and motions through and to prevent studies from being carried out. That will not necessarily be in the best interests of the people, who would otherwise be duly represented by their representatives in the House.

The government wants to give itself free rein to do whatever it wants. It will be, as they say in a language we occasionally hear in Parliament, "my way or the highway".

Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to talk to us about a few things in a little more detail.

The Prime Minister sweet-talked us about collaboration, openness, and partnership. He put up a nice facade, wore a nice suit, gave a nice performance. However, behind the scenes, on the floor of the House of Commons, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is doing the exact opposite of what the Prime Minister publicly announced to the media, in front of reporters.

Can my colleague tell me what will happen if a scandal is uncovered and we want to learn more? The matter will be impossible to discuss in any committee because the Liberals will reject the motion. They will block transparency. Can my colleague elaborate on the current issue of transparency and accountability?

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a case of "shut up" or "keep talking". That is how the government works. The Liberals will do anything they can to avoid accountability when questions are being asked.

It is a different way of doing things, but it is clear that the Liberals want as little transparency and accountability as possible, so that they can do things however they like. Even the Prime Minister's attitude makes this obvious. He avoids being in the House during question period as much as possible.

I think the opposition is going to have to get creative. Generally speaking, Bloc members tend to have creativity in spades. We will make use of the tools still available to opposition MPs. In particular, we can invoke Standing Order 106(4) in committee.

We will use the media as much as possible to rub salt into any wounds there might be. I have a feeling that, as people see us doing this, they will realize what the government is trying to hide. Three and a half years can be a very long time. At the end of those three and a half years, we will see where public opinion stands on the Liberal government.

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[English]

Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the great member for Montmorency—Charlevoix today.

Before I begin on the issue at hand, I want to quickly recognize our great farmers in Oxford County who are preparing for the planting season. As the weather warms up, they will be back in their fields. I just want to wish them the very best. They feed our families and they deserve love and respect for all the great work they do. To all our members who will be travelling in our rural streets and rural roads, I ask them to please be careful and look out for farm equipment and tractors, to be safe and to be vigilant. Let us keep supporting our farmers, because farmers feed our families.

We are all elected by tens of thousands of Canadians who put their trust in us to come take a seat in this chamber, to be a part of our parliamentary system and to be their voice on issues that matter to them. These are issues like affordability, crime, housing or any challenge they face. It is our job to speak for them in the House and in committees. The seats we sit on in this place or in committees, we are holding in trust for our constituents. These are not our seats. This seat is not my seat. It is the seat of our residents, Oxford County. This is what we represent in this chamber every single day.

Last election, the people chose a minority government. They gave this government a minority mandate, but through dirty backroom deals, through floor crossers, the government brokered a majority. The Liberals can say all they want, but the member who crossed the floor herself had said that it was good for her personally. Nothing should be good for us personally the day we take the oath of office. It should be good for our community. It should be good for the country. We are not sure what backroom deals they made, but they made those deals. They brokered a manufactured majority.

However, it is still our job to be His Majesty's loyal opposition. In this chamber, it is an act of loyalty to be in opposition. It is our job to hold them accountable for their actions. Any bill they put forward, it is our job to take a look at, to make sure they are not trying to pass things that will hurt Canadians, that will make life tougher for Canadians.

A committee serves many purposes. Whether it is looking at the bill itself for substance or calling on witnesses to testify, to make better legislation or to expose corruption or the mishandling of taxpayer funds, a committee serves as a tool for us to hold them accountable. We all know the Prime Minister barely shows up for question period. His attendance record is horrible. I think the last time I read the stats, he had about a 27% attendance rate to answer any questions we have.

An hon. member: It is worse now.

Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, it is probably worse. That is right. Every day that goes by and he does not show up, it gets worse. Former prime minister Harper showed up. Even Justin Trudeau showed up; he is worse than Justin Trudeau. They showed up. They had the decency to face this chamber and to face committees.

The committees do great work. For example, we all remember the great arrive scam app that the government was held responsible for. It was discovered in committee. The great work of our committee members exposed the millions of taxpayer dollars that were wasted by the Liberal government. We remember the WE Charity scandal, where the Liberals were lining the pockets of their friends, their insiders. There was also the SNC-Lavalin affair, where they tried to pressure the Attorney General at the time. We remember the green slush fund, which was another massive abuse of power, of money. Do members remember the Aga Khan scandal, where they took money and they were found guilty of ethics violations? These were all things that happened and were exposed through committee.

I know the Liberals are upset. They are very upset, because they want power. It is all about power for the Liberal government. That is all it cares about. We can forget the last Liberal government, which they claim is the new government now; let us talk about the so-called new government. We have asked their finance minister to show up at committee. This is because we all heard about the \$90 billion the government wants to spend on the Alto train. The minister of finance's partner is an Alto executive. There is \$90 billion of taxpayer money going to the finance minister's partner.

• (1615)

The Liberals do not want to talk about the issue at committee. The minister refuses to show up. Just this morning we talked about PrescribeIT, another boondoggle by the government, hundreds of millions of dollars wasted. If it was the Liberal members' money, they would not be spending it. It is hard-earned taxpayer dollars. We have called that out at committee. They are sending billions of dollars to entities that are tied to Brookfield. The Prime Minister is a shareholder. It is his former employer. These are all things that Canadians care about. We do not want corruption in our country.

If the Liberals have nothing to hide, why not let the committees do their work? Canadians voted for a minority government. The people spoke. They knew what they wanted. They wanted the opposition to hold the government accountable. Yet again, with this new motion, the Liberals are trying to hijack those institutions as well. They will be rushing through legislation. They might go in camera, hiding everything from the public's view. We need tools to do the job. Strong oppositions make for stronger government. When we shine the light on the government, the Liberals are forced to act and actually do their job.

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However, for some reason, and it is a growing trend, no matter at what level, they are afraid of questions. They are afraid to answer. This means they are afraid of Canadians. They are trying to silence the voices of Parliament. Members on different committees do a fantastic job. They do hard work, they research, and their team comes prepared to make things better, to make democracy better.

I know Canadians are demotivated because when I go back to my riding, I speak to constituents and I get phone calls. They are losing faith in our democratic institutions. Some of the comments I have heard are saying, "My voice does not matter anymore." "Why would I vote?" "Why am I a part of this system?" That creates this negative image of politicians and of Parliament, but it also puts Canadians in a very demoralized state. When Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, they want to know that the things happening in this chamber are actually in their best interest.

With this government, again, it is control, censorship and shutting down Parliament. I can tell members that on this side of the House, with these great colleagues, we are not going to give up. We are not going to stop. We are going to hold the government to account every single day because that is what we were elected to do in this chamber. Whether it is through committees, questions here in this chamber, petitions or town halls, Canadians are going to see every single one of our members holding the Liberal government accountable for its actions. We are going to watch. We are going to raise concerns. We are going to be a loud and proud opposition, and we will hold the Liberals accountable.

Our country is worth fighting for. Our people, who sacrifice so much, are worth fighting for. The potential of our amazing country is worth fighting for. That promise of Canada is worth fighting for. We are not going to stop. We are going to hold the Liberals accountable. We will keep that fight going right to the end.

• (1620)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that we have an amazing country. It is the best country in the world to call home. We have a Prime Minister and a government that work every day of the week to build Canada strong for all of us.

The member talked about abuse of power. We could easily talk about the past, about "Stephen Harper, Serial Abuser of Power" and the evidence that was compiled. We could talk about the dozens of infractions. However, let us put the past behind us and talk about going forward.

All that is happening in this motion is that we are recognizing that if a party has a majority of seats on the floor of the House of Commons, it gets a majority of seats in the standing committees. That is the history and the tradition of Parliament here in Canada and the Commonwealth. Does the member believe in that principle?

Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, I believe in the tens of thousands of folks who elected me. I believe in the millions of people who voted for this opposition to do our job to hold the government accountable.

The government made backroom deals to manufacture this majority. If the Liberals had some decency, they would keep our committees the way they are, let Canadians hear the truth, stop this power grab and stand up for democracy.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by every objective measure, the Liberal government has had more ethics violations and has been accused of more corruption than any government in Canadian history.

My hon. colleague gave an excellent speech outlining some of the concerns he has in regard to what the government will do when it is given more power. Could he expand on that a little further and help Canadians understand the fear they should have when the government tries to take more power?

Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, absolute power comes with absolute responsibility as well. We have seen a pattern in the past. The member talked about ethics violations. The government has been found guilty of 10 ethics violations. Guess what. The punishment was 200 bucks.

If it was not for the work at our committees, and if it was not for the work of the opposition, the Liberals would try to hide from those scandals, and Canadians would never know.

If they are not afraid of the work they are doing, let the committees stand. Let Canadians see the truth. When we shine a light on the government, we make better government. That is our job, and we are not going to stop fighting for that.

• (1625)

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who does this motion give control to? Does it give control to the Parliament or to the Prime Minister's Office? What are we trying to hide here?

I would like the hon. member to list all of the compromised situations we are going through right now with the party opposite. What is it going to do in the future? Who is going to hold the Liberals accountable? With this makeup of committees, I do not think anybody is going to know what they are doing.

Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, I have already mentioned that in my speech. It is a great question. It does require some follow-up. We have seen the Alto scandal that is unfolding in front of us. That is a big problem. The PrescribeIT scandal that we asked the AG to investigate today is a massive scandal. There are tons of others.

For example, today the Liberals announced the bankers special fund for debt, where they are going to be putting billions of dollars into some sort of debt financing, which is going to, again, open the government up for more scandals. It is a slush fund the Liberals are setting up. Where there is money, they have a history of corruption. They have been caught in the past.

We are going to keep on fighting that good fight. We are not going to stop. I know they want us to stop. They are trying very hard. We are not going to stop. We are going to keep fighting, and we are going to hold them accountable.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is an expression that describes Canadian election outcomes: The people are always right.

What did the people of Canada collectively decide as the outcome of the last election?

Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, they wanted a minority government where there were checks and balances in place, where we held the Prime Minister accountable, where we held him to his promises. The Prime Minister has broken all his promises. He is making up things as he goes. He is literally trying to control and censor Parliament. He is trying to take control of committees so he can push his radical agenda on Canadians. That is not what they signed up for. We are going to make sure we hold him accountable for that.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting with many people in Montmorency—Charlevoix recently. I have been having a lot of meetings. People are becoming increasingly interested in politics. I had a really interesting conversation with one woman who came to see me. She said something that really stuck with me. She told me that she was not really sure what we were doing in Ottawa, but she did not think the Liberal government was there for the people. She said that if no one were keeping a close eye on things, she thought everything would go off the rails.

The woman in question does not have a background in political science. She has not read the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. She does not know what an oversight committee is. Still, she instinctively understood something that is fundamental to our democracy, something the Liberals seem to forget far too often, specifically that democracy works best when the opposition is able to do its job. It makes everyone better.

What we are debating today with Motion No. 9 is not really a matter of parliamentary procedure. It is not really a technical debate about committee composition. I believe it is a much simpler and more fundamental issue for democracy. The real question is this: Who is monitoring the government?

I was sent here by the people of Montmorency—Charlevoix. They are workers, families, retirees and entrepreneurs. These are people who get up in the morning. They pay their taxes. They work hard. They expect the government to respect them, not just by saying that it has the right to do something because it is in the fine print. No, the government shows respect by respecting the spirit of the law. Ethics are more challenging than the law itself.

Let us talk about rights. Being a member of Parliament is not a right. It is not a title. It is not a career. It is not something that is owed to us. It is a privilege granted to us by citizens. Our mission is to serve Canadians. With that privilege comes a responsibility that I take very seriously. I want to make sure that somebody is watching, that somebody is asking the tough questions and that somebody is holding the Liberals accountable.

Our colleagues on the other side of the House do not seem to like that mission very much. I will give a very simple example. Last week, I was at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. A Liberal was serving as chair. During my col-

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league's opening remarks, she interrupted him six times in six minutes just as he was preparing to ask a question. It was because she did not like what he was saying. It was not the version she wanted to hear, so she took it upon herself to interrupt him over and over.

I am not even referring to the 17 and a half hours of Liberal monologue that was used to prevent the Minister of Finance and National Revenue from testifying about a recusal he himself had made and failed to follow through on. It was a perfect demonstration of what lies ahead if this motion is passed today. In a parliamentary democracy such as ours, oversight is not optional; it is not a courtesy the government extends to the opposition. It is the foundation upon which everything else rests.

Let us look at the facts. They are pretty straightforward. A year ago, Canadians gave the Liberals a minority mandate. It was not a majority. It was a clear minority, sending a message that required no interpretation: The people told us to co-operate and work together in the interest of Canadians. Committees were set up to respect the people's vote. They were composed of four Liberal members, three Conservative members and one Bloc Québécois member. The chair was either a Liberal or a Conservative, depending on the type of committee. For oversight committees, the chair came from the opposition. Why was that? It was to make sure that the government could be held accountable for its decisions.

Eleven months later, after backroom deals and undemocratic negotiations that ignored Canadians' voting rights, the Liberals scraped together a slim majority. The very next morning, what did they do? They brought forward a motion to take control of the committees. That was the first thing they did with their fragile majority. The very first thing was to try to get the upper hand over the people whose job is to monitor them.

Even Radio-Canada, on what I would describe as a very pro-liberal panel, characterized the Prime Minister's approach as authoritarian and described Motion No. 9 as an abuse of power. That is quite something, coming from CBC/Radio-Canada.

Let us also talk about the mechanics of the Liberals' fragile majority. Let us talk about the floor crossers. Every time a member crossed the floor to join the Liberals, the timing coincided perfectly with a period of political pressure on the Liberal government. Just as the Liberals presented the largest deficit budget in Canadian history and the public was still waiting for results, one member turned his back on his constituents and crossed the floor. Just as he was facing uncomfortable scrutiny over potential conflicts of interest, the Liberals recruited him.

Another example was when the government needed to change the narrative. Members will recall that it was because the Leader of the Opposition travelled all over the world, appearing on podcasts to convince the American public that Canada is still needed and that it is a strong ally. The Leader of the Opposition travelled all over the world and was highly respected.

Government Orders

● (1630)

The Leader of the Opposition had been pitch perfect. The Liberals needed to change the narrative about their failures, so, lo and behold, someone crossed the floor. We were told that it was a matter of conscience and personal convictions. That was not a coincidence; it was a pattern. It is clearly a strategy.

I am going to explain what Motion No. 9 does in a language that everyone will understand, especially at this time of year. Let us imagine that we are in game seven of the playoffs. The series is tied at three wins apiece. The arena is packed to the rafters. Millions of people across Quebec are watching the game. The blues are on one side, the reds are on the other. The third period starts. The referees hit the ice. What do they do? They head over to Jon Cooper, high-five the players, have fun with them. They take a little sip from the team's cup. They chat with Jon, who points at certain players. They take notes. Fans start wondering what is going on. What is worse, the commentators are already announcing the final score. Those same reporters are saying that the Habs took a beating before the third period even began.

What would people say? Would they accept that outcome? Would that inspire confidence in us all? Does that sound like an honest game? No, it does not, because everyone understands a basic truth: A person cannot judge their own case. That is exactly what Motion No. 9 does, in the end. It turns the Liberals into very biased referees.

We are not talking about abstract committees. We are not talking about committees that produced no results. We are talking about committees that, among other things, probed the ArriveCAN scandal, in which \$59 million of taxpayers' money was spent on an app that should have cost a few million dollars, with contracts awarded without a call for tenders to a four-person firm working out of the basement of a house not far from Parliament. It took nine different investigations to start scratching the surface of that scandal, and it all started with an oversight committee.

An oversight committee launched the investigation into the Liberal green fund. An oversight committee first addressed the issue of foreign election interference before the inquiry into foreign election interference was launched. It was also oversight committees that shed light on the Prime Minister's potential conflicts of interest with Brookfield. If, in the near future, Canadians stop hearing about scandals, it is not because there are no more scandals. It is simply because the government paid off the referees.

I am going to say something that may surprise my colleagues on the other side of the House. I understand the theory behind what they want to do. Traditionally, a majority government holds a majority in committees. It is true that this is a parliamentary convention. If the Liberals had received a clear mandate from Canadians a year ago to ensure that their election platform was fulfilled and if everyone had gone to the polls to vote for a majority government, I would not be here debating today.

However, that is not what happened. A minority government was elected, but it engineered an artificial majority through timely defections, dubious funding, promised perks, trips, and potential or actual investments in certain constituencies. The first thing this

government is doing with that majority is locking down the oversight mechanisms.

Men who built our democracy long before my time have explained it better than I can. John Diefenbaker, Canada's 13th prime minister, said that "freedom always dies when criticism ends". Lester B. Pearson, our 14th prime minister, who was a Liberal, said that the health of Parliament relies on the opposition's right to oppose, attack and criticize. Mr. Pearson understood that the health of democracy depends on an opposition that can do its job. This is not a Conservative idea, but a democratic one. It is quite simple to understand.

What the opposition is asking for today is simple and reasonable. It costs nothing, unless a government has something to hide. Let the Liberals have their majority on legislative committees. That is their right. However, for committees that have an exclusive mandate to monitor the government—the public accounts committee, the government operations committee, the ethics committee—we need the current composition to stand. That is the balance that Canadians have asked for, the balance that allowed a light to be shone on the Prime Minister's conflicts of interest, apparent conflicts, violations of his conflict of interest screen and phony recusals that undermine Canadians' trust in our institutions. That is the amendment we are proposing, and I urge every member here to ask themselves one question: If, in the future, a government is elected that we do not trust, would we want to have tools to monitor it?

The woman I met was right when she said that if no one keeps a close eye on things, everything will go off the rails. When the priority of a government with a new majority is to gain control over the people who monitor it, I can say that this woman was right. If Motion No. 9 is adopted as is, the next time that this woman is proven right, no one will be able to tell her so.

● (1635)

In closing, the opposition exists for several fundamental reasons. We are here to analyze, to ask questions on behalf of those who sent us here. We are here for the workers of Montmorency—Charlevoix who pay taxes and want to know how their money is being spent. We are here to hold the government to account. I will say one last thing. We are here because Canadians from Victoria to Gaspé deserve a government that is not afraid to answer questions. We must reject Motion No. 9.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said this a great deal already this afternoon: It is a fairly straightforward motion that says that if a party makes up a majority of the membership on the floor of the House of Commons, it gets to have a majority of the members on the standing committees.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, the Conservatives are putting forward an argument. If a party had a 172-seat majority and one person walked over to the opposition, the opposition is saying that it would be taking the position it is taking right now. That would be ridiculous. We know that it would not do that.

Let us take a look at the tradition, heritage and history of Parliament. I think we recognize that a majority is in fact a majority that should be on the standing committees.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Hardy: Mr. Speaker, that is not a very good question, but I will answer it. If my colleague wants to talk about history, we can say that the past 11 years have been quite disappointing in terms of this government's decisions. As I said in my speech, I think it is very important to stop focusing on the minutiae and the right to do something. The Liberals are always telling us that they have the right to do this or that, even if it is unethical. There is a comma or a period in the law somewhere that gives them the right to act that way. However, who makes the laws?

Ordinary people are fed up with this. They want a government that prioritizes ethics, a government that understands that doing what is ethical is harder than doing what is allowed. They want a government that will be there for them. Citizens created institutions to serve them, not so that those institutions could serve themselves.

My response to my colleague is that perhaps the government should adapt to the citizens who voted for it.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix on his speech. He concluded his speech by saying that we need to vote against Motion No. 9. We can debate the substance of the motion, and I would tend to agree with him on that.

That being said, what truly bothers me, what irks me and what is so contrary to my values is the way the Liberals are preparing to pass Motion No. 9, in other words, by imposing closure. That does not work. That takes the debate out of the equation. What I find particularly rich and particularly difficult to accept is the fact that the first thing this Liberal government does as a majority government is to use a closure motion to shove down our throats an overhaul of committees that is not even representative of Parliament.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that. If that is the Liberals' first move as a majority government, what does he think the next three years have in store for us?

● (1640)

Gabriel Hardy: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from my colleague. I think we all know the answer. We have seen it. I, for one, came face to face with it last week when I sat through an intense 17-and-a-half-hour Liberal monologue that was intended to ensure that a minister who had recused himself but did not want to come and answer questions would not be called to appear. We saw it last week when my colleague started speaking and was cut off six times by the Liberal serving as chair.

The Liberals do not want us to question their decisions because they think they are right. They are here for themselves, not for the people. Let me tell members something: We need a strong opposi-

tion. We need a Parliament that respects the opposition's work. It is high time the Liberals got that through their heads.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about a voter in his riding who understands that the Liberals are not here to defend the interests of ordinary Canadians and Quebeckers.

I would like to ask my colleague the following question. How do his voters feel about the fact that, even though Canadians elected a minority government and a strong opposition, the Liberals want to take control of committees so they do not have to co-operate with any other parties anymore?

Gabriel Hardy: Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that the member asked his question in French. I thank him for that. Bilingualism is an asset, and we are seeing that here today.

It is simple enough. The public is watching. They thought that Parliament would be forced to collaborate, that Canadians would finally have a Parliament that puts the public's interests first, rather than a government that only puts its own party's interests first. What we are experiencing here is the complete opposite.

This is how it has been from the start. Every week, we are accused of blocking Parliament's work, even though we are suggesting ways to improve the Liberals' proposals so that everyone benefits in the end. The Liberals do not like that. What they want is simply what they want, when they want it and how they want it. Unfortunately, that is not what the public voted for. It is high time the Liberals realized that this is not an autocracy, but a democracy.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today. It is always an honour to rise in the House. I am speaking today as part of the debate on a key issue, specifically government Motion No. 9. The purpose of this motion is to introduce changes that could be described as innovative. These are unprecedented changes aimed at altering the composition of committees.

[*English*]

We know what the topic is before us. It is certainly unprecedented because the situation is unprecedented. We have never had in this place a change after an election where the composition of committees is to be changed because, according to the government, there are now more Liberal MPs than there were after the election. There is no question regarding the numbers: the result is that we have moved from a minority Parliament to a majority Parliament.

Government Orders

It gives me an opportunity to get to some of the basics that we very rarely get to talk about in this place, which is assumptions that are made about the nature of committees and the rights of individual members. Unquestioned, in the way this motion is put forward, is the notion I wrote to the Prime Minister about, after the election. I said, “Please do not forget to include, when they are considering committee makeup, the very respected and experienced parliamentarians who happen at the moment to be in an unrecognized party.” I was speaking not of myself and the Green Party, but of, at that point, seven New Democratic Party MPs who were experienced, thoughtful parliamentarians who all had good experience on committees.

We knew we had a lot of new MPs. We have seen problems where committees can become overtaken by an effort to filibuster, but it is not always the case. Certainly, experienced MPs with committee experience are worth consideration to put on committees. That certainly is not immediately the issue at hand with the numbers and rejigging the numbers to ensure that there is a Liberal majority of members on those committees. I am unfortunately in a position where I cannot say what the Prime Minister thought about my proposal because, although I put a lot of thought and effort into that letter, I did not get so much as a courtesy reply, “We have received your letter and we will get back to you at some point when we have absolutely nothing better to do and can consider it.”

I went through the research to confirm what I understood to be the case, which is the status of every member of Parliament. I put it the other day to the hon. government House leader, who agreed with me. “Oh yes indeed, all members are equal in this place. Oh yes indeed, we all have equal rights,” said the hon. leader of the government in the House. Obviously, yes, that is our fiction, but our reality is somewhat different. I had more rights in this place when I was first elected in May 2011 than I have today.

As is always the case, larger and more powerful parties spend a great deal of effort to reduce the rights of smaller parties. Smaller parties and opposition parties spend a lot of effort trying to scupper what a larger party wants to do when it is in government. It is kind of an endless cycle and it is not really in the interest of democracy. It is also not what happens in other Westminster parliamentary systems around the world.

I am going to spend a bit of time now going back through the recognized party rules. What does it mean to be a member of a recognized party? What are their rights in that situation? I double-checked with our Clerk before I wrote the letter to the Prime Minister, to say, “Am I right? Is it the case?” I just wanted to double-check that nothing has changed in our rules. In 1963, Parliament passed a law that created the concept of a recognized party. Without any self-interest, the members of the larger parties decided larger parties should by right have money in order to support their work in Parliament. Because larger parties have so much more work than smaller parties, goes the fiction, they need public funds to do the work of MPs in Parliament. That is the recognized party law from 1963. It has been unchanged. It says that if they have 12 members, they get money. That is all it says. It does not say anywhere that if the party has fewer than 12 members, they do not get as many questions in question period. It does not say anywhere that if they have

fewer than 12 members, they have no right to be a full member of any standing committee.

• (1645)

I double-checked with the clerk. I suggested to the clerk, and I hope the clerk does not mind me recounting the conversation, as I do not think it was terribly private, that this constitutes a really bad habit, this practice of saying that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands cannot sit on any committee and would get one question once a week at the end of question period, etc. That is not part of the recognized party law. That is a bad habit. The clerk put it into more parliamentary language: It is a practice of long standing. In other words, I did not have it wrong. There is no law or rule that says members of Parliament from whatever size party cannot be full members of a standing committee. It offends no rule. It offends no law. It just ignores a practice of long standing. However, it adheres far more closely to our beautiful fiction that all members of Parliament are equal to every other member of Parliament and that the Prime Minister is merely *primus inter pares*, first among equals.

We know that when the recognized party rule was created, it created two tiers of MPs. One is those from larger, recognized parties. For citizens who may be watching this discussion, the minute we get 12 members of Parliament, we get about \$1 million in extra resources from the parliamentary budget to support our parliamentary work. We have had cases, and I will not mention them, where parties have used the money they get for parliamentary work quite inappropriately, and I would say illegally, for partisan purposes. However, that is a separate question. The money is the only thing the 1963 recognized party law is about. Rights to participate in committees are not a part of that, nor are rights in question period, etc.

Then we go to this: How far and wide is this practice in Westminster parliamentary democracy? How much did this Canadian idea of recognized parties catch on? The answer is, not at all, not anywhere. We are the only Westminster parliamentary democracy that ever created the idea that there are two tiers, that larger party MPs or their parties get money—

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke is rising on a point of order.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the motion has to do with the number of positions the Liberals are putting on committees, not what a party is. That is not the discussion here. It is the number of people allowed on a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke for her intervention. I will say that we allow a broad latitude on discussions. I see where the member is going, relating it back to the question at hand, so I will allow her to carry on.

Government Orders

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, what I am putting forward is entirely on point with respect to the motion we have before us. The assumption that underlies what the government is doing with this motion is that it was beyond even consideration that there should be seats on the committee for members of the New Democratic Party or the Green Party or any members who happen to sit in this place as independents. There is no rule against it. I think most members of Parliament, if I gave a pop quiz, would be surprised to hear that we are the only Westminster parliamentary democracy that uses this concept of a recognized party at all.

Beyond that, when we look at the results after an election, if we are looking at proportionality, which is at the essence of the government's position in Motion No. 9 because it now has a majority of representation in this place, we want committees to actually reflect the way people voted, with the number of seats at committee reflecting the number of votes obtained in an election, to reflect the democracy of this House into each committee. I think it would have been worthwhile, although I note that it was not considered by the Liberal benches, to consider that proportionality would include the approximately or somewhat under 8% of Canadians who did not vote for any of the recognized parties. That would be some representation on committees, which the Liberals could still have considered when putting forward Motion No. 9, and I think they should have considered it.

As I said, I wrote the Prime Minister about the composition of committees at the very beginning of his mandate to suggest that we want committees to work and that experienced parliamentarians from any party should be considered for full membership because it offends no rule at all, and it reflects more of the principles on which we believe this place to be founded in a Westminster parliamentary democracy.

[*Translation*]

We are all equal, and each and every one of us has the same rights, the same powers and the same tools to find solutions for Canadians.

[*English*]

When I speak to the motion, it actually is important and directly on point to point out that the recognized party law has been misunderstood for many decades now, and it would be a good time, when we are in this unprecedented transition, to go back to what our House of Commons stands for. That is the reason that it is not an offence under parliamentary rules for someone elected as a Conservative to decide to go sit with the Liberal Party, any more than it was for a Liberal member of Parliament from Paul Martin's immediately deceased cabinet. David Emerson comes to mind. He was elected as a Liberal, and when former prime minister Stephen Harper swore in his new cabinet, there were jaws dropping all over the place as the limos pulled up in front of Rideau Hall and famous Liberal David Emerson got out to be sworn in as a member of Stephen Harper's cabinet.

This is a perpetual problem in Parliament. It is really awkward, because most people have short memories and forget they are living in a glass house. When someone lives in a glass house, it is not a good idea to throw stones. We can say many things about floor crossing, but it is not against our rules, and it is certainly not a sur-

prise, depending on who has just gained the person who crossed the floor. I lost a dear friend. She is still a friend, but I lost a friend when the member for Fredericton, elected as a Green, went and sat with the Liberals. I never said a single mean or nasty thing about her. Her reasons were her own.

Under our system of Westminster parliamentary democracy, we do not put forward candidates to act as cardboard cutouts, as proxy representatives of the leader who cannot be present everywhere, with a recorder button that we can push to hear the voice on some kind of cassette tape. I am using a very old-fashioned reference. I am sure that, with all the social media and AI that we have, we could get a hologram leader of a party to travel around with every candidate and actually seem to be speaking to their constituents. However, the point is that we run as individuals. We are elected in our ridings by our constituents, and the only place we can find a job description for what we are supposed to do as members of Parliament, because there is not a very handy job description, is in our Constitution. All it says is that members of Parliament represent constituencies.

Back to Motion No. 9, what we are doing here is not a big surprise, but I do think there have been cogent arguments made by a number of opposition members as to why this is not a good idea and would create a precedent that the Liberals today may regret having put in place for a future occasion. I found particularly compelling the argument from the member for Saint-Jean.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

The member for Saint-Jean contributed additional data to today's debate. She did some research and presented evidence showing that committees do not have a strong track record when it comes to creating barriers.

[*English*]

The member for Saint-Jean pointed out with evidence that in the last number of years, parliamentary committees have not been blocking government legislation. Sometimes it has actually been Liberals in control of Parliament who have filibustered their own legislation. In fact, right before the last election, we had a long period of time when the whole House of Commons was caught up in a Conservative motion on a matter of privilege before committee. All of us who were serving at that time will remember it as sort of a long and painful version of Groundhog Day, where every day we debated the same thing, and every time the Conservatives amended their own motion, they reset the clock and every Conservative member could speak to the same thing again and again. Therefore, the filibustering of one's own motion is not unheard of. Filibustering in committee, even for one's own bill, is not unheard of.

Government Orders

Committees need to function well, and for them to function well, there needs to be a basis of trust and respect in this place. Since I was first elected, I have seen it deteriorate. One thing that deteriorates trust and respect in this place is when members of Parliament are bulldozed by the party with more power. I have experienced, just for the record, more bulldozing since the April 28 general election in this place as a member of Parliament for the Green Party. I feel sort of more physical pain from the bulldozing that took place to get through Bill C-5 very quickly, with full Conservative Party support, no obstruction and no interfering with the Liberal government's agenda. Things were moving with a lot of co-operation, except for those of us who objected, and those of us who are not in recognized parties, as I said, have fewer rights today than I had when I was elected in 2011, because I can no longer stand with four other members of Parliament and insist on a recorded vote, which I was able to do from 2011 until the COVID outbreak.

I know that the debate is going to come to an end very shortly. I do not want to use my full time allotted, because I think my points have been made pretty clearly at this point. I would ask, and I hope, that when we look at this again, PROC will be engaged to study committee membership. I hope we will actually have a proper study and discussion of why we have misinterpreted the recognized party rules to such an extent that there are two tiers. It does get very Orwellian. All MPs are equal, but some are more equal than others.

With that, I urge this place to defeat the motion before us and attempt, if we possibly can, not to build this place on “might makes right” or “numbers rule all”, but get to a place where we have real conversations and real study and respect democracy and the people who sent us here.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very much aware of the situation that the leader of the Green Party finds herself in. I served in the Manitoba legislature, and there were often just two people. We never really had party status, except for the first few years. My daughter is the only Liberal MLA in the Province of Manitoba. She has been able to pass legislation and resolutions and work her way onto committees. The leader of the Green Party is fairly effective in doing likewise, getting herself in a position where she can provide comments and so on.

I have also been in minority governments, in opposition and in government, and majority governments, in opposition and in government, and what we need to understand is that there is nothing in this motion that would take away anything from independent members. I was an independent member for many years.

I would ask the member, does she not support the principle, which is done reasonably well, that a majority in the House should mean a majority in committees?

• (1700)

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North will recall that nowhere in my speech did I draw attention to any difficulties myself, as three of my private member's bills have become law. I think that exceeds the batting average for most. What I am pointing out is that members of committees should have been considered from more than just the three recognized parties. With

only three recognized parties, power has shifted even more into a centralized role.

I agree that this motion does not change my rights, but it does give me an opportunity to point out that the recognized party rules are misinterpreted and misunderstood, and I am not an independent member. I am a member here on behalf of the Green Party of Canada.

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion reeks of corruption. Can my hon. colleague tell us if the motion is for better governance or better damage control?

I know their party stands for transparency and accountability. Will this help the Green Party in that?

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of every government I have witnessed is to accumulate more power for itself and generally more power for its prime minister. This is not the way of healthy democracies.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate the member from British Columbia on her insightful and interesting speech. It is clear at times like these that all political parties have different perspectives to offer on the issues we are debating. I found the Green Party's perspective relevant and interesting.

Under the circumstances, I was wondering about something. In her speeches in the House, the member often acts as the voice of Parliament's conscience. I think that is how she tries to do her job, at least sometimes. Does that famous conscience tell her that the government is on the right track or the wrong track right now?

Personally, I get the impression that the government is taking advantage of its honeymoon period to take increasingly authoritarian action, and that is dangerous because it sets precedents. Obviously, we have not reached the point where democracy is at risk, but still, I find these actions troubling. They are leading us down a slippery slope. They are not constructive and they do not build trust.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed Bloc Québécois colleague. I think he is right. To answer his question, I think that the current government is on the wrong track. The government has done away with programs aimed at addressing the climate crisis. It has passed bills that violate the rights of refugees, for example.

The government has lost sight of several priorities. I used to think that the Liberal Party shared these priorities, but not anymore.

Government Orders

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, I listened carefully to what my Green Party colleague had to say. Unlike the Bloc Québécois member, who refers to her as a member from British Columbia, I refer to her as a member of the Green Party. That is simpler and members know right away who I am talking about. It is like the good old days because the member is now sitting on the same side of the House as the official opposition like she was in 2015.

Speaking of elections, I would like to remind the House that, tomorrow, it will be exactly one year since almost all members of the House, except two, were elected. It is rather odd that the government wants to shut down debate on a democratic issue on the eve of the anniversary of the 2025 election.

In her case, the member was elected to the House of Commons for a fifth time. Since we are talking about elections and anniversaries, I would like to hear her thoughts on the importance of respecting the will of Canadians as expressed at the polls without taking floor crossers into account.

• (1705)

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is true. It is almost the anniversary of the election and there are several members for whom this is their first year in the House. I very much regret that they have not had the experience I had. I worked for the Progressive Conservative government. I was not a party member, but I worked for Mr. Mulroney's majority government. There was more democracy back then. There was more commitment to the environment and to human rights.

I am disappointed. We must establish systems that work for humanity and for the planet. We must not give in to the current power of a government that has a Prime Minister who is very popular, but not very democratic.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the Green Party member, who represents a riding in British Columbia. I commend her on her intervention and for having the determination and endurance to rise in the House even though she is her party's only representative. That is entirely to her credit.

While I do not want to play up her seniority too much, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands has been here since 2011, if I am not mistaken, and she has seen a lot of water flow under the bridge. Some members are new here, arriving just after the by-election a few weeks ago. As my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk said, tomorrow will mark one year since a number of new members arrived in the House. However, they are seeing the government engineer a majority in a highly questionable way and impose a gag order on the first day of this majority to alter the composition of committees in an equally questionable way.

I would like to know whether this is the government's idea of democracy and parliamentarism. I would also like to know whether my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands has any advice for the new members who have just taken their seats in the House.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, here is my advice. If they want to make a difference for their grandchildren, then the members need to immediately reject the opinion of their party whip. They need to

show moral courage for the sake of our grandchildren and our county. To make a difference, it is vital that every member is able to exercise their rights in the name of democracy, not merely for the sake of the leader's power.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not speak French, but I am learning French on Duolingo every day. Today, I reached a 1,068-day streak.

[*English*]

One would think I would know, or I should know, more French by now.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands referenced early in her speech that the fact that we are turning the House from a minority to a majority is an unprecedented scenario. Would she acknowledge that this is the first time in Canadian history that it has also been the result of a concerted campaign from the PMO?

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, as far as we know, there has never been an effort to recruit MPs to shift from a minority government situation to a majority. As I mentioned, it is not unusual to see members cross the floor. Again, there is nothing particularly against our principles, but I think it does tend to, increasingly out there in the hustings, feel a bit fishy.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Grande Prairie.

I said in my maiden speech, when I got to this august chamber, that this seat does not belong to me. Indeed, it belongs to the people of Elgin—St. Thomas—London South. I am a mere custodian of it. I say that to make the point that Parliament itself, this House of Commons, these institutions, are bigger than any of us as individuals. They are bigger than all of us even as a collective. These institutions matter more. This place matters more than the political ambitions, motivations and decisions of the people who get to come here every election.

I have always venerated this institution. Indeed, I have always been fascinated by it. Even going back to when I was a university student involved in politics, I loved partaking in model parliament. I loved taking the opportunity to learn more. Perhaps it is why I have never been reprimanded for not addressing my comments through the chair or not doing some of those other conventions: I have been a student of parliamentary history.

It was an honour the first day I walked into this chamber, and it remains the honour of a lifetime to be here.

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It has been saddening in that same vein to see how, for the Liberal government and specifically the Prime Minister, Parliament is a mere annoyance. We have seen the ignorance in this place: the fact that the Prime Minister has a question period attendance rating that is a fraction of that of his predecessors; the fact that he loves “showboating”, to use a word he is fond of, with fake executive orders that have no legal standing in our country; and the fact that he has been doing everything but governing in this place, governing in this chamber.

To govern in this chamber is to be held accountable to Parliament as the collective body representing the will of the Canadian people. Parliament is a body comprising fellow custodians of this chamber, who are sent here with very similar mandates from each of their respective constituencies and constituents. However, we see in the motion before us today that the government does not believe it can win the game, so to speak, so it is changing the rules. It is changing the rules to suit its political ambitions, irrespective of the will of the Canadian people and irrespective of the norms, conventions and traditions of this place.

It should be known to everyone here that Canadians do not, in fact, elect a government; they elect a Parliament. Tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary since Canadians elected me, alongside all of my colleagues from all parties. Canadians elected a minority Parliament. The message Canadians sent in doing that was that they were prepared to give the Liberals a fourth term. I question why they would do that. However, while they were prepared to give the Liberals a fourth term, Canadians wanted their power to be checked by a strong, robust opposition.

Now, my Conservative colleagues and I have held up our end of the bargain as His Majesty's loyal opposition. We supported and improved legislation such as Bill C-5, Bill C-14 and Bill C-16, which is before the justice committee right now. We opposed dangerous bills, such as Bill C-2 and Bill C-9, which the Liberals wanted to wave through without scrutiny and accountability. We worked collaboratively across party lines. We represented the will of Canadians, who elected MPs to champion, for those of us on the Conservative side of the aisle, the values of liberty, personal responsibility and, yes, fiscal discipline.

However, what we have seen over the last year is that when the Liberals do not get their way, they scream obstruction. Opposition is not obstruction. We have seen this in a minority Parliament. I recall when Stephen Harper and the Conservatives had one just a few years ago. A minority Parliament requires the government to find dance partners, so to speak, to find collaboration and earn collaboration from opposition parties. The idea of holding opposition parties hostage to support bad legislation, which is what the Liberal government has tried to do, is not what a minority Parliament is supposed to be.

We have seen under this arrangement, specifically at committees, a situation in which the Bloc has held the balance of power. I have seen votes in which Bloc and Conservative support was enough to pass a motion against the will of the Liberals. I have seen Liberal and Bloc members pass motions against the will of Conservatives. On a rare occasion, I might have even seen Liberals and Conservatives vote together, with the Bloc being the odd party out.

• (1710)

Even when we have lost a vote, frustrating as that may be, I can take comfort in the knowledge that the Liberals were forced to cooperate with someone. They had a check, however modest, on their power. Today, the Liberals would enshrine their desire for a legislative blank cheque, stacking parliamentary committees to reflect their morally illegitimate majority. I say illegitimate majority because it was crafted not by the democratic will of Canadians but by the Prime Minister sending out his cabinet ministers to peel away the unscrupulous and the shameless opposition MPs who hold the will of the Canadian people in as little esteem as the Liberals do.

This morally illegitimate majority is the consequence of that which they now seek to ratify by stacking the deck on committees. Committees are not the property of the government. They are creatures of Parliament. In many ways, they are where the real work happens, where scrutiny can happen, where amendments can happen and where real vigorous debates on the merits or lack thereof of legislation happen.

If the government can manufacture a majority at will, scrutiny is merely choreography. They are seeking to not have a check on their power and to not have scrutiny of their legislation but rather to have a rubber stamp on anything they want to do.

I am reminded of a quote from John Diefenbaker. In April 1957, he was speaking at Massey Hall in Toronto, and he said, “The sovereignty of the people is delegated to Parliament, not to the Executive.”

The Prime Minister could learn a great many things from John Diefenbaker. One of the lessons is that government is about accountability, not control. Another lesson is that parliamentary scrutiny should be welcomed and not scorned. As evidence that these Liberals are uninterested in accountability and collaboration, one need only look at how they rejected our modest amendment to the very motion we are debating today, which would have preserved the status quo on oversight committees such as ethics, government operations and estimates, among others, committees that are not responsible for reviewing legislation but are tasked with being a watchdog on the government.

Why the Liberals do not want to cede control on a committee overseeing ethics, I think, is becoming more apparent by the day. That is precisely what we are looking at here: a government that does not wish to engage in Parliament, a Prime Minister who holds this institution in contempt and a government that does not want to engage in something so seemingly beneath it as seeking and preserving the will of the Canadian people to enact its legislative agenda.

The motion that we have before us today, which I will be opposing, does not strengthen Parliament. It sidelines it. That is something that every member of the House should reject.

I go back to the comment I made earlier about when the Liberals try to invoke obstruction as a narrative. We have given them much of what they asked for when they sought permission to do things that will build the country up. Bill C-5 is a great example of this. They said they wanted monumental, sweeping authority to approve major projects. We said we would love to see major projects. We gave them permission to do this and the framework to do it. No major projects have materialized. Here we are a year later: The Liberal government has promised much and has delivered little.

The one mechanism that could be preserved to ensure that Parliament remains in keeping with what Canadians elected was a committee structure that would force members of Parliament and would force government members to do what the Liberals claim they have wanted this whole time, which is collaboration. No, they are laying their demands bare today with the motion. They do not want collaboration. They do not want co-operation. All they want is capitulation. We say no.

• (1715)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the comments that the member has put on the record are interesting. I disagree with most of those comments. As I have illustrated before, the Prime Minister has talked about working in collaboration. We saw a good example of that earlier this morning. We have a majority government, yet we passed a member of the opposition's legislation through on third reading. The collaboration is what is important.

When we take a look at the standing committees, it is very simple. If we have a majority of members that make up the floor of the House of Commons, we get a majority on the standing committees. Every Prime Minister who has had a majority has had that situation. I do not think we should be trying to pass judgment on individual members. I think we should be recognizing and supporting parliamentary tradition. Does he not—

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite likes to say that the Liberals are interested in working with all parties.

Interestingly enough, the new Liberal member of Parliament for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong had a very different story to say. In fact, she said that she was trying to get federal attention and investment in her riding, but did not get so much as a response until she crossed the floor to the Liberals. She said, and this was after she crossed the floor, “It went really nowhere, until I crossed the floor. This is what I'm hoping will be the result.”

These Liberals are only interested in working for Liberals.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Elgin—St. Thomas—London South on his speech.

In the speech that he gave here in the House, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said, “We are proposing to

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adjust committee membership proportionally to reflect the party standings in the House. It is as simple as that. There are no games, no untoward tactics and no strategies here.”

He also said, “My fear is that some members across the aisle are more interested in scoring political points and creating divisions for their own partisan gain, at a time when we really need to co-operate and collaborate in good faith to deliver on issues of critical importance for our country.”

He then went on to say, “Collaboration is the approach to politics that Canadians...want in this place for all elected representatives. They do not want partisan gamesmanship.”

Does my colleague think that is what the Liberals are doing?

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. I think that my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois asked some valid questions about the formula the Liberals are using, but I also think that it is important to look at how this majority came about.

We have never seen a government use defections as a tactic to secure a majority that Canadians did not elect. Canadians do not want the Liberals to have complete control over the parliamentary agenda in committee.

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we saw in Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act, that even though the committee had unanimous agreement on amendments, when it came to report stage the amendments were all stripped out.

The government is already all-powerful in here, in what it wants to get done. What other aspects of committees will the government now control, besides amendments and the other things we do in committee, for example, scrutinizing bills?

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, it is not just about amendments, as the member indicates; it is also about the agendas for committees. There are a number of committees that engage in studies that want to invite ministers to appear. As we have seen in the case of the ethics committee, the Liberals have staged a massive filibuster to block the finance minister from having to testify about his clear conflicts of interest on the \$90-billion Alto boondoggle.

It is not just about amendments; it is about avoiding ministerial accountability at the committee level, where members get the chance, not just in a 35-second question period slot but in a real substantive way, to question ministers who right now desperately need the accountability and scrutiny.

Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was mesmerized by the speech my colleague just gave. It is remarkable the lengths to which the Liberals will go to get their hands on power. That has been the Liberal story through all of history.

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I will give the Liberals credit for one thing: their ability to seize power and take credit for doing absolutely nothing. They are truly masters of illusion. Never has a government been given so much credit for doing so little. As a matter of fact, I would suggest that doing little might be an improvement over what the government has done, in some cases causing Canadians to fall backwards.

The current Prime Minister ran the last election on grand promises. I think we can all recall the grand promises to reverse the Trudeau era and bring back prosperity and hope to Canadians. He went to great lengths to explain how he would reverse the policies of his predecessor, saying that the Liberal Party of the past was no more and that he would be coming in with a new vision for Canada. He said that he would reverse the anti-development Trudeau era and that he would build new infrastructure in this country to get more product to new markets, specifically saying that he would approve and build pipelines and infrastructure in our ports to ensure that we could get our products to places that had never seen Canadian product.

He said, “We will need to do things previously thought impossible at speeds we haven't seen in generations.” He went on to promise that he was going to make life affordable and bring down the price of groceries and homes. He asked to be judged by the prices on grocery-store shelves, that he would get a deal done with Trump and that he would negotiate a win on trade by July 21. I will point out that the year that he made that promise was for July 21, 2025, nearly a year ago.

He said that he would get new trade agreements done and would diversify our trading relationships. Now, a year later, absolutely nothing has been done. There are no new pipelines, no new infrastructure that has even been proposed and every one of Trudeau's anti-development laws are still in place. Unfortunately, he has made it worse. He has layered on additional red tape and more bureaucratic hurdles.

When we look at where we are today compared to where we were even a year ago, we have to compare ourselves to our international partners. When we look at the G7, we rank the worst in household debt, food inflation and housing costs. Canada currently has the only shrinking economy and the second worst unemployment rate in the G7.

With this motion the Prime Minister currently has before the House, the Liberals are taking the unprecedented move to rig the government in their favour and ensure that all of this accountability that Canadians deserve would be wiped away. They know they have failed to fulfill the promises that they made to Canadians, and they know that by rigging committees and ensuring that they have the majority on committees, all these uncomfortable questions would disappear. It is a clear effort by the Liberals to stack the deck.

I want to explain the egregious nature of this stacking of the deck. I think it is important for Canadians to understand the real assault on the democratic rights of Canadians that is currently being undertaken.

• (1725)

In the last election, the Liberals won the election by 43.76%, and that translated into 49.27% of the seats in the House of Commons, which was already overrepresented vis-à-vis what the Canadian people had voted for, but that is how our system works. After the floor crossings, the Liberals now have 51.4% of the seats. Again, let us remember that this is the first time in Canadian history where a Prime Minister gave favours to individuals to cross the floor, moving them from a minority government to a majority government. The Liberals now have 51.4% of the seats in the House of Commons, but Motion No. 9 would give them 58% of the seats on committees.

Canadians have been told that committees are where the real work of the House of Commons happens. They are where we dig deep, get to the nuts and bolts, and pull back the curtain to discover what is actually happening. Obviously, in this chamber, it is often-times dramatic speeches and a fair bit of cut and thrust, but at committees, that is where there is the opportunity for parliamentarians, on behalf of our constituents, to drill down to find out what is happening.

However, through the unprecedented measure the Liberals are now undertaking, the Liberals would go from having won just under 44% of the popular vote to getting 58% of the seats on committees, where the real work of Parliament happens. To give a little context, due to five members of the House of Commons crossing the floor, the Liberals now believe they are entitled to 52 new positions for Liberals on the House of Commons Standing Committees.

The media has taken notice. I will read into the record what Andrew Coyne had to say about the Prime Minister. He said, “This is a government and a Prime Minister with an autocratic streak a mile wide.” Althia Raj, who was also quoted on CBC, said, “This Prime Minister definitely has an authoritarian streak.”

Even the media on CBC is responding in complete disgust and disbelief that the Prime Minister would undertake this. At a time when Canadians desperately need more accountability in the House of Commons, the Liberals would remove that accountability through this motion.

When we look back at previous scandals of Justin Trudeau, we saw the WE Charity scandal entirely exposed because of the work of the committees. The SNC-Lavalin affair was a scandal that demonstrated just how much the then prime minister Justin Trudeau was trying to manipulate a court process, which was completely exposed because of the work of a standing committee. The green slush fund scandal was completely exposed because of the work of a standing committee. The arrive scam scandal was exposed because of the work that was done at committee.

This is what the Liberals currently want to stop, because before our committees right now, we have Liberals who will not let witnesses stay at committee when it comes to witnesses such as Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, who has been the whistle-blower on the working conditions for the Chinese manufacturers of the Chinese EVs that the government wants to import to Canada.

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• (1730)

The ethics committee is currently being filibustered by the Liberals to make sure that issues before that committee will never see the light of day. We are currently also seeing the Liberals filibustering at the fisheries and oceans committee to ensure that those scandals never see the light of day. We are also currently witnessing a filibuster at the health committee, where Liberals will not allow the PrescribeIT scandal to come to the light of day. At transport, the Liberals are filibustering a Bloc motion, supported by the Conservatives, to force the Liberals to produce documentation. The human resources committee is currently being filibustered by the Liberals.

The Liberals are doing all of this, including this motion, to ensure that these scandals never see the light of day. We will continue to oppose and fight this.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we are debating history and past scandals today, I would love to share dozens of them. I have a book of over 100 scandals from the days of Stephen Harper, when the member's current leader was involved. If the member wants to get a copy, he can come on over and I will show him some of the quotes, which include contempt of Parliament.

At the end of the day, a party has a majority of the seats on the floor of the House of Commons. According to the rules, and according to our parliamentary heritage, which is not only in Canada, but also in the Commonwealth, that means that majority should be extended to the standing committees. That is what we are doing. To try to say there is a Conservative and Bloc alliance, and everything they do in committees is absolutely wonderful and delightful and in the best interest of Canadians, is balderdash.

Does the member really believe that we should be going against parliamentary tradition because—

• (1735)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. chief opposition whip.

Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, did members notice something? The member did not mention one of the scandals. He says there are hundreds, but he could not name one.

I will tell members about one. The Liberals howled for days to force a minister to resign from the House of Commons because, on one of her expense accounts, there was a \$16 glass of orange juice. That is what the Liberals howled at for weeks. That minister resigned because there was an expense for \$16 of orange juice.

We have \$500,000 catering bills for the Prime Minister on his private jet. The Liberals have nothing to teach us about honour. They only have—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the speech by the chief opposition whip. Having served as a whip myself, I know that it is a very demanding role that also requires a

thorough understanding of parliamentary procedures. I have a question for my colleague.

As we speak, there are two or three committees that are at a standstill, including the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The Liberals are filibustering and refuse to discuss issues that require transparency and testimony so that we can examine matters that are somewhat sensitive but necessary. Right now, it is the Liberals who are filibustering in the committees.

We are not opposed to committees having a majority, but we believe that seven Liberal members is excessive. It is an abuse of power. We wonder if the official opposition whip feels the same way we do.

[*English*]

Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, it is clear what is happening. The Liberals, having won a minority, want the power of a majority. There have been floor crossings that bring them over the technical definition of a majority, but now they are demanding 58%, nearly 60%, of the seats on standing committees.

Currently, most committees are seized by Liberal filibuster. Effectively, that means that, if the Liberal members keep talking, the chair cannot move to a vote for the issues that are before those committees. That means that nothing will happen until such time as the Liberals can force this motion through the House of Commons, giving them the effective majority on every single committee.

Obviously, the purpose of this entire process is to ensure that nothing happens at those committees that the Liberals do not agree to, specifically transparency.

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave a thoughtful speech. Conservatives believe Parliament should hold the government accountable, not make it easier for Liberals to avoid scrutiny. Even today, the Liberals are filibustering at the ethics committee.

Can my colleague explain how these proposed changes would impact the function of Parliament and how we ensure that Parliament works for Canadians, not just for the government of the day?

Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the entire reason that the Liberals are bringing forward this motion is so the committees would work for the Liberal Party of Canada rather than the people of Canada.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to participate in this particular discussion. I will be sharing my time with the great member for Whitby, and I am pleased to be able to do that.

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It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak about Government Motion No. 9, dealing with the composition of committees. Every member in this place understands the critical role that committees play in our parliamentary system. It is in committees where the hard work of legislating gets accomplished as bills are reviewed, amendments proposed and diverse perspectives are considered. This work ensures that legislation is improved upon before it makes its way back to the House.

Committees are also a place where issues of importance to Canadians are studied. It is where the hard work of legislating gets accomplished as bills are reviewed, amendments proposed and diverse perspectives are considered. This work ensures that legislation is improved upon before it makes its way back to the House. Witnesses appear and offer their unique perspective. Ministers appear to defend and explain their actions and to be held to account. It is a system that is of the utmost importance to the functioning of democracy.

As chair of the international trade committee, I can say that we have had numerous witnesses who have come before us to give us insightful ideas and thoughts on the challenges they are facing in this new world of tariffs.

Nothing in the motion that we are debating today would change any of this. Committees would continue to carry out their important functions. Ministers would continue to appear to answer questions and defend their actions, and estimates would continue to be studied. Committees would retain all of the powers they currently have and be free to study anything that is within their mandate.

This motion has one goal, and that is to maintain the long-standing tradition in our Parliament that the party that has a majority of seats in the House of Commons also holds a majority of seats on committee. I am going into my 26th year here, and that has always been the case. Whoever was in government was able to get whatever extra seats they wanted.

It is not just members on this side of the House who are saying this. It is a recognized tradition within our system. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, first edition, makes it clear on page 819, where it states, "Where the governing party has a majority in the House, it will also have a majority on every House committee." This is not something that the House leader invented over the weekend and decided he was going to do. Page 819 is very clear on what the practice is to be.

Additionally, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, states on page 790, "Party representation on committees reflects the standings of recognized parties in the House". Therefore, the motion we are debating today is entirely consistent with upholding the traditions of the House.

It is also important to talk about how the government has proposed to make the changes to committees. It could have looked at previous majority government numbers and mirrored that approach. To do that would have required removing members of the official opposition from committees. The government chose not to do this and instead took an inclusive and collaborative approach, which is what we really have been using for this last year with the successes we have had by all working together.

The Prime Minister has been clear that the government intends to work collaboratively with all members of Parliament. The Prime Minister has stated, "We are absolutely focused on working with Parliament, getting legislation through Parliament, adjusting legislation where it needs to be, where it's better informed by discussions in Parliament, where we have to make compromise in order to do it. And we've shown that. We've shown that consistently."

● (1740)

Removing official opposition members of Parliament from committees was an option, as I mentioned, but it was an option the government chose not to proceed with, as we are serious about wanting to work constructively with all members. The government took a different approach. The motion we are debating would simply add members from the governing party to committees to ensure that the party with the majority of seats in the House of Commons also has a majority of seats on parliamentary committees. It is that simple.

The changes proposed in the motion reflect the operation of the House of Commons. Namely, the numbers in committee would ensure that the government has a majority and that the chair of the committee would not need to vote and break a tie. The motion was drafted this way to mirror the state of play in the House, as always, where the numbers are such that the Speaker also does not need to vote to break a tie.

It is an undeniable fact that the makeup of the House of Commons has changed since committees were formed. The government has gone from a minority government to a majority government. The Conservatives continue to argue about how this occurred, but that does not change the fact that it has occurred. As a result, the government has a duty to ensure that the makeup of committees reflects this reality.

Because the change occurred partway through the current Parliament, the government took a responsible and constructive approach to this change that would preserve all the members from the official opposition on committees. We recognize the role these members play at committees. We respect the expertise that they have gained and that they bring to the debate. Much like we want to build Canada strong, we have chosen addition rather than subtraction in our approach.

I think it is also worth pointing out that if a government were to go from a majority to a minority, the opposition would demand that committees also reflect that reality, so the motion we are debating today is a reasonable and responsible response to a change in the makeup of the House of Commons. The government has gone from a minority to a majority, and the motion would simply ensure that this is also reflected in committees, as has always been the case.

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One of the things I really value as a member of Parliament is hearing the diversity of perspectives that all members bring to their work. Canada is such a massive, diverse and beautiful country. Policies affect people differently depending on where they live. By all of us coming together to debate the issues of the day, we all benefit from the perspective of others. This is especially true in the work we do on committees. Legislation is made better through the perspective of others. Issues are studied because members from a particular part of the country think they are important. All of this would continue after the passage of the motion. Committees would continue to do the heavy lifting of Parliament and ensure that all perspectives are heard.

I look forward to continuing this important work we all do on committees, and I will continue to work collaboratively with members from all political stripes to build Canada strong. We are at a challenging time in our country right now, and I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to this motion.

• (1745)

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Liberal MP this: Is it not true that Liberals would be adding two new members to committees so they could have a majority and then the Liberal scandals could no longer be revealed or investigated?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the work we do at committees is important, and this would not be to avoid anything. The debate and discussions would continue as they did before, and they would continue probably more robustly.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is a gag order designed to limit speaking time on a fundamental issue, namely defining how Parliament and its committees operate. Normally, this is done in consultation with all the parties, out of basic respect for the principle of representation in the House.

Representation is already questionable because the government does not have a true majority. Its majority has been cobbled together with floor crossers, but it gets even worse. If we used the Liberals' current majority, that is, if we were to recognize it, they would end up with roughly 50% of seats. That should come out to just slightly more than half the members on committees. Normally, the Liberals should have one more seat than the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois combined.

Unfortunately, what is happening instead is that the Liberals want to give themselves nearly 60% of the votes on committees. Sixty per cent of the seats on the committees is equivalent to having nearly 200 members in the House, 199 to be exact, while the Liberals actually have 174.

How can they explain this overrepresentation of a government whose majority is false to begin with?

• (1750)

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear comments from my colleagues about majorities and not majorities. It is about the number count. We have the numbers that are required. Other

members, yes, crossed the floor, because they want to be part of dealing with one of the most challenging times in the history of our country and wanted to be part of finding solutions.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the comments my colleague and friend has put on the record, highlighting the recognition that it is about the chamber, the number of members of Parliament. Parliamentary tradition and history have shown that it has been very successful, not only here in Canada but also in the Commonwealth, that if a party has a majority of seats on the floor of the House of Commons, it gets a majority of seats in the standing committees. That is something that has been there for generations, and there is no reason to change it. Would the member not agree?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, there are certain parts of tradition that we want to make sure continue. When we look at the past, we see that it has always been the case that whoever has the majority makes the rules. It does not say, "if there is a majority this way or that way".

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I asked the government a question regarding the Gordie Howe bridge, which is in my riding. Instead of an answer, I got banter, jokes and an invitation to switch sides.

I have a lot of respect for the member opposite. She has a measured tone. Can she speak to the accountability that she has often referred to, and does she believe that deflection and jokes from government ministers meet the standards she has for accountability?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to continuing to work with my hon. colleague, probably on many of the committees we are talking about today.

The member made reference to the Gordie Howe bridge. That is such an important bridge, and I look forward to attending when it is officially connected. It will do wonders for trade in both Canada and the U.S., and I look forward to being with the member when—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Humber River—Black Creek for her 26 years of serving in the House and for her mentorship and friendship. The speech she made today was great. She is a testament to parliamentary tradition and also to a very progressive agenda for her community that I know she has pursued all throughout her career. I am very proud to call her a friend.

After six and a half years of serving in the House, it is an honour to rise today to speak to government Motion No. 9. I say six and a half years because, since 2019, I only ever served in a minority Parliament. It is a great honour to be standing here today with our government's having earned a majority, whether through floor crossings or by-election results. Nonetheless, as my previous colleague mentioned, this does not change the fact that our government now has 174 seats in the House, which is clearly a majority of the seats.

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Before turning to the motion we are debating, I want to spend a little bit of time speaking to the important role that committees serve in our parliamentary system. Canadians obviously have the opportunity to watch us here daily in the House of Commons. They watch us fiercely debate important pieces of legislation. They can see the work that we put into both making sure that bills pass and making sure the laws get the scrutiny they deserve, by asking questions and engaging in robust back-and-forth of ideas and perspectives. I know how challenging that process can be at times, but I think we are all better off for it.

However, there is one place in the system of Parliament of making laws and passing bills where Canadians can sit directly across from us, and where we benefit from hearing from people with vast amounts of expertise and experience across many different fields. That is at committees.

I have served on the industry committee, the finance committee, the procedure and House affairs committee, the agriculture and agri-food standing committee, the science and research committee, and the human resources, skills and social development and the status of persons with disabilities committee, which is a great committee. I have visited OGGO, ETHI and many of the other committees to sub in for colleagues from time to time and to participate in debates. All of them have been a privilege.

What I particularly appreciate about committees is that we do not just look for answers from each other as members of Parliament but we also get to hear from the Canadians who, ultimately, elect us. Their voices get to be heard, and I think that is really powerful. The studies we undertake at committee, although sometimes a little laborious, I admit, at other times can really contribute both to parliamentary debate and also to government initiatives and responses, and they can better inform the whole process of democracy.

Our best work at committee is often done when we are working together. That goes without question. I have been part of many committee studies in which we did not start out agreeing, that is for sure, but eventually came to reach consensus.

Committees give us the opportunity to come together in smaller groups on a regular basis. We get to know each other across party lines. We often find that we have more in common than we think or assume, even if we come from places that may be thousands of kilometres apart or from communities that have real regional differences that we all come to appreciate. Our shared understanding of and ultimate respect for our work on committees can bring out what is truly best in all of us.

There are many examples where members of the House, on our own and with members from the other place, have worked together with amazing results. I will point to the MP for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, who worked on pension protection years ago in the House. She is now a member of our party on this side of the House, which is great. We welcome her on this side of the House, but previously she served in the Conservative Party. She brought forward, I would say, an imperfect bill on pension protection, an issue that my constituents and I care deeply about, which also crossed all party lines. We worked both with the member and across all parties to find a solution to that private member's bill, to eventually pass it in the House.

• (1755)

I am very proud of that work. I am proud to have supported that member and her initiative. Even though I was not the one leading it, and I may not have gotten the credit for it, that does not matter to me. This place works better because we work together, in this case, to protect pensioners by making sure that when a company goes through insolvency, pensioners are protected, that they get paid out not last on the list of creditors. That initiative proved to me years ago that this place can really work and that the function of committees is truly powerful.

Another example that is more recent is that of the MP for Simcoe North, who is a colleague I served with on the finance committee, with Bill C-230, an initiative he brought forward to increase transparency on debts owed to the Government of Canada. I found the member of the Conservative Party to be extremely reasonable and thoughtful, to participate in debates in good faith and to consider the amendments the government put forward and willing to accept some of them. In some cases, we negotiated back and forth to find a middle ground. That is what makes this place work. That is democracy in action, and it is the stuff that makes me proud to have served in the House for the last six and a half years.

That sentiment is what we want to achieve with the restructuring of committees. We want to work collaboratively across party lines. We want democracy to work for Canadians. That is what this government stands for and what I stand for as a member of Parliament. I know my colleagues on this side of the House, all 174 of us now, believe in that vision, which is to work on behalf of Canadians to make this place function, to pass better laws, to do better studies and, yes, to hold the government to account. That is exactly what we can achieve when we work together.

I know there are many ways to interpret this motion, but I think it is important that we all take those committee responsibilities seriously and work as a group, hearing each other's perspectives with a common goal in mind, as with previous joint efforts on those committees. For example, Bill C-225, sponsored by the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, would, if adopted, make changes to the Criminal Code to create new offences related to intimate partner violence and coercive control. That is a very important issue to many of us, and I think we can stand together and work together on that. I know there is a general desire on behalf of all of us to do right by Canadians.

There are many other examples. I will point to just two more. I served with the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Brampton North—Caledon and the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, who was here a moment ago. She is not in the chamber at the moment, but I will say that—

• (1800)

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the member. The member cannot refer to the presence or absence of a member in the chamber. It is against the Standing Orders.

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I will let the parliamentary secretary continue.

Ryan Turnbull: You are right, Mr. Speaker. I contravened the rules unintentionally there. My apologies to you and all the members.

With that said, those members and I served on the procedure and House affairs committee. We looked at Centre Block revitalization. We talked about foreign interference, which we studied for nine months in committee. We studied the hybrid provisions during the pandemic to change standing orders so government could function during the middle of a global pandemic to pass legislation, put programs in place and save lives. I am really proud of that work. I know that committee functioned well, even though there was lots of rigorous debate. This is exactly what we can achieve when we work together.

Committees will continue to function that way with them reflecting the majority in the House. As the member previously mentioned, committees have an important function of oversight and accountability, but what is clear is that they need to mirror the proportionality of seats in the House. That is exactly what Motion No. 9 proposes to do.

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my community, the one question I get from people is this: How are we going to keep accountability and transparency alive in government? The election has happened, and a lot of members ran their election campaigns on accountability and transparency. If there is a change of this order to committees, adding two more members of the government to committees, I wonder how that would not change the outcome of what is expected.

Is the need for control so great that the voices of Canadians no longer matter with regard to transparency and accountability in committee?

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question, but how have opposition parties held majority governments to account since Confederation? It is by doing their job, and they can do that job at committee and in the House just as they have done throughout our entire history. It is just the case that the member takes issue with the fact that the motion proposes to reflect the majority of seats that the government holds in the House of Commons in committee, which is a tired and true tradition in the House. It has been tested over time. It has been a principle since Confederation, and I do not see why we would change that now.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are filibustering on a number of committees right now to prevent opposition members who have the majority from holding the government to account, from obtaining information, from calling witnesses and from receiving documents, essentially, to prevent them from doing their job, which is to determine what is going on and to ensure accountability for the government's administration and decisions. The committee I sit on is facing this situation.

When I see that several weeks have passed since the Liberals decided to block committees where the discussion and debates are not

to their liking, and when a motion to take control of the committees appears at the same time, a question comes to mind. Are the Liberals filibustering in committee to buy time? Was their plan to play this game until they secured a majority to avoid parliamentary accountability?

[*English*]

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the sentiments from my colleague, wanting to hold the government to account. As an opposition MP in the House, he is well aware that is his job. It is the same with the Conservative Party. How did we hold Stephen Harper to account when he had a majority in the House? How did the opposition hold our government accountable from 2015 to 2019? There are tools that are designed right into our parliamentary system to ensure that opposition parties, even when the government has a majority of seats in the House, can hold the government to account. That is how this place has functioned since Confederation.

Conservatives, in the middle of the pandemic, filibustered for many, many weeks trying to prevent the Government of Canada from functioning to help Canadians, so they had a tool to hold us to account then. It is not as if filibusters were just invented yesterday. Extended debate happens in many committees. It is a tool that the Conservatives and the Bloc have used. It is a tool that will continue to be used, I am sure, in our parliamentary system.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, first edition, explicitly states that when the governing party holds a majority in the House, it also holds a majority in all parliamentary committees. There is therefore a well-established tradition in our Canadian parliamentary system that when a party has a majority in the House, it also has a majority in committee.

I would like to ask my colleague why it is so important to uphold traditions and principles for the proper functioning of our Westminster-style system of government.

[*English*]

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, certainly I believe in tradition. I believe in the Standing Orders, although I understand that they evolve over time. This is what I was trying to point to with the fact that the Conservatives, during the middle of a pandemic, filibustered in committee and made arguments that we should never change the traditions of the House. I see that there are moments within an emergency situation where we need to adapt and be able to do the work and function as a government. At the same time, I understand that in moments like these, the traditions of the House allow opposition parties to hold the government to account.

It is so fundamental in terms of representing and mirroring the proportionality in the House in committee. That has to be preserved at all costs. I do not think the members opposite are saying we should change that tradition, but they only want to abide by—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

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Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Why do we get involved in politics? Why do those in this chamber put their names forward to stand for an election and all that it entails? The answer, of course, varies and is undoubtedly different for different people. Some run for office to seek change in their local community. Others are motivated by matters of principle or feel compelled to act on behalf of deeply held ideas or beliefs. As we have seen recently, others get into politics for the sole reason of furthering their personal interests, cozying up to power and, maybe worst of all, accumulating power for the sake of power itself, even if it means selling out their constituents and betraying those they were elected to represent.

For the first time in more than 150 years of Canadian history, a Prime Minister has sought the almost unlimited power of a majority government in Canada not through a mandate from voters but through deception and deceit, quietly courting a handful of self-interested, duplicitous MPs through backroom deals and who knows what else, effectively overturning the results of an election and concentrating power that he may covet but has not democratically earned. The result is millions of Canadian voters who are angry and thousands who feel as if their vote was stolen, and I can see why. When someone is elected under a party banner, it is not just a personal victory. It is a commitment to the people who supported them and that platform, those principles and that vision for the country.

In the last election, none of these elected MPs communicated to voters that they would consider crossing the floor just months after the vote. That matters, as does the context within which their decisions were made. It has been less than a year since the last election. The major party leaders are exactly the same. The party platforms are essentially the same. The primary issues facing this country, unfortunately, such as the cost of living, increasing crime, a faltering economy and the ongoing trade dispute with the United States, are also the same now as they were one year ago. If these MPs wanted to represent the Liberal Party of Canada and defend the Liberal platform in this Parliament, they should have made that decision before the last election. Then again if they had, most, and probably all, would have lost their seats. Therein lies the problem.

The Prime Minister is accumulating political power he was specifically and unequivocally denied the last time Canadians went to the polls. We are not just talking, of course, about a handful of individual seats without any broader consequences. We are talking about fundamentally changing the balance of power here in Ottawa, radically remaking the minority government that voters delivered last April, when the Liberal Party and the current Prime Minister were restrained by the need to compromise and consult with opposition parties and were held accountable at committees with production orders, witness testimony and investigative motions. It was a minority government that has now been transformed through backroom deals and floor crossings to a majority that never should have been. It is unethical, it is fundamentally undemocratic, and it has had the effect of essentially disenfranchising thousands of Canadian voters. If a party wants a majority government in this country, it should have to earn it at the ballot box, just like every other government since 1867 in our country.

Here we are. What is done is done, as they say. The next question is, what comes next? It only took a matter of days for the Liberals to tip their hand, moving a motion that we are debating here today to stack committees with not one but two additional Liberal MPs, trampling the oversight powers of Parliament, limiting transparency and laying the groundwork to ram through their agenda. This is from a party that loves to engage in lofty rhetoric about compromise, the defence of institutions and bringing people together. However, at the end of the day, I think what all this exposes is that the only real principle the Liberal Party knows is power, power at all costs, power even as an end unto itself. The Liberals are not about to let something as inconvenient as an election result get in the way.

● (1810)

What will they do with all this newly acquired power and the ability to pass essentially whatever they want? We have seen, over the past 12 months, that what the Liberals say they want during an election and what they actually end up doing can be two very different things. For one, they promised to get Canada's fiscal situation under control and to rein in the excesses of Justin Trudeau, who doubled Canada's debt in just 10 years. Instead, under the Prime Minister, the deficit has actually increased. They also promised to prioritize Canadians' public safety after the increases we saw over the past decade in violent crime of 50%. Instead, the first bill they submitted to the justice committee did not target repeat violent offenders at all but rather the free speech of law-abiding Canadians. As for their signature promise, to negotiate a trade deal with the United States by July 2025, well, it has now been a year since the last election. There is still no deal, and the tariffs remain in place. In fact, the tariffs are higher now than they were back then.

Meanwhile, some other legislation that the Liberals actually campaigned on, such as speeding up the construction of projects deemed in the national interest and introduced as Bill C-5, has been supported by the Conservatives and indeed improved through negotiations and the committee process. It all raises the question: For what purpose do the Liberals seek their near-unlimited power today? For what purpose do they seek to upset a 159-year-old Canadian political convention? Is it that they seek to restrict the opposition from conducting inquiries into their many conflicts of interest? Is it to shield the sunlight of transparency by blocking requests and blocking production orders for government documents and reports? Is it that they tend to introduce radical legislation they did not campaign on and know that none of the opposition parties would be able to support? Maybe it is a combination of all three.

One year ago, I was elected in my riding of North Island—Powell River as the Conservative Party candidate. I ran on a clear platform, a clear set of commitments and a clear vision for this country: to stand up for Canada's resource sector, with forestry, mining, oil and natural gas; to target the real criminals in our country, the repeat violent offenders, not those exercising free speech and not law-abiding firearm owners who have never committed a crime in their life; to stop the reckless spending and endless deficits; to get the cost of living under control; and, finally, to get our men and women in uniform the equipment and support they desperately need and deserve, while always standing up for our country. I intend to honour the promises I made and the guarantees to those who entrusted me with their support and their vote.

Today, with the Liberal motion, this patently naked grasp for political power, there is no denying one very simple fact: My job and the job of my opposition colleagues is certainly about to get a lot more difficult. However, that just means we will have to redouble our efforts and work harder than ever before to hold the government to account, to be the voice of our constituents and to be the voice, as always, of Conservative common sense. We can then ensure that the very real concerns and interests of hard-working, tax-paying and law-abiding Canadians are not ignored and that their priorities, through our efforts and our pressure, become the priorities of the government, however reluctant it is.

• (1815)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it relates to floor crossings, I will read a quote that was once said in this House. It reads:

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, I believe members of Parliament should have that freedom and be accountable to their constituents for their decisions at the next election. However, in my observation, the only parties that really have this as an obsession are the parties that no one ever crosses to.

Can the member please explain why he so fundamentally disagrees with Stephen Harper?

Aaron Gunn: Mr. Speaker, I was elected to the House to voice my opinions. This is not a quote from me.

What I can tell the member, which I totally pointed out in my speech, is that there have been many floor crossings in the history of Canada, but never in 159 years has a government openly courted a large number of MPs to cross the floor to try to change the balance of power in Ottawa and give them a majority government that they did not earn during the last election. This is what is happening today. This is why so many Canadians are angry; this is why thousands of Canadians feel disenfranchised, and this is what we are standing up against.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has rightly pointed out, there has been a shift in the balance of power in Parliament, which is simply the result of a wave of defections. People have been lured by the prospect of power. We do not know what was promised to them, but I know there have been specific discussions regarding one MP who left the Conservatives to join the Liberals.

Does my colleague have any details to share with us regarding the procedures or methods used by the Minister of Housing and In-

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frastructure, in particular, to make phone calls and promise people gifts in exchange for switching sides?

• (1820)

[*English*]

Aaron Gunn: Mr. Speaker, the truth is that this is a question Canadians would like to have answered. I do not have the answers. We do not know what conversations were happening behind closed doors. We do not know what was offered or what enticements were made. That is the very essence of the problem. Is the balance of power in this chamber, in this House, about to be upset because of conversations that Canadians were not subject to, did not have a say in and did not have a vote on?

I wish I had the answers to my hon. colleague's questions, and I think Canadians wish they had those answers as well.

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that Canada is a wonderful country, and we must commit to making it even better.

Today, we heard from my colleague, the member for Windsor West, about this issue. He said that he had an offer from members across the aisle to cross the floor.

Time allocation and closure motions are too often used by Liberals to shut down debate. The committees should be a place of real accountability, not Liberal-controlled roadblocks. Does my colleague agree that changes to the Standing Orders should limit the abuse of these tools and restore respect for members of Parliament?

Aaron Gunn: Mr. Speaker, Parliament and the workings of the House should reflect the democratic mandate given during the last election.

The Liberal Party and the Prime Minister sought, and did not receive, a majority government from Canadians. What they have now done, through backroom deals and who knows what else, is manufacture a majority government. Their first order of business is not to try to do something to help Canadians, but it is to radically stack committees with Liberal members of Parliament.

We believe in more transparency, more oversight and more accountability for the government, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to push for in opposition, even if the government is about to make our job much more difficult.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that is very appropriate for what we are about to go through in the House of Commons and something I want all Canadians to think about. It is that when they show us who they are, we should believe them. One hour into the debate to give the Liberals a majority on all committees, a majority which was not obtained through the results of the last election, they brought forward a closure motion. A closure motion is used to close down debate.

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Why am I talking about closing down debate? It is because the Liberal government has a strong authoritarian streak. It has been found guilty of invoking the Emergencies Act. It has used parliamentary overreach at every single opportunity it has. In fact, earlier in the week, we were conducting a debate on Bill C-22 about lawful access, a very serious piece of legislation that sets the parameters for which police and other authorities can access Canadians' digital footprint. Every time a Conservative member got up in this chamber to debate the issue and make points about the problems with the legislation, the Liberal deputy House leader got up and accused them of filibustering and obstruction.

If that is not bad enough, right after he would accuse Conservatives of engaging in filibuster and obstruction, a Liberal member would get up and speak. We can see the authoritarian streak in the Liberal Party every single day when we engage in debate in the House of Commons. If a Conservative member or an opposition member from the Bloc or the NDP gets up to speak, that is obstruction and filibustering. However, if a Liberal member gets up, it is somehow a wonderful thing that is happening in this place. This is how Liberals engage. This is the respect they have for the democratically elected opposition parties.

While they were in a minority status, we were able to keep that in check, and we did that in many ways. For example, Bill C-22 came from a piece of legislation, Bill C-2, which contained all kinds of Liberal authoritarian overreach. Through opposition to that, the bill was split. Now that they are going to reorganize committees, the opportunity to do that would get significantly smaller. It would almost not exist because they could do such things as what they have just done. This is a motion to radically change the composition of committees. It would not just be adding one extra Liberal member, as would be appropriate; they would be adding two. They would not just be adding two extra members to the committees that they say are the ones to get things done, such as finance or others; they would be taking control of the oversight committees.

Why is that important? Why would I say this is something that Canadians should be very concerned about? I will give a couple of examples. Right now, at the ethics committee, which is one of the oversight committees, the Liberals have been filibustering for I do not know how many days. What are they filibustering over? Is it something important, a critical piece of legislation, a bill they think the opposition parties are going to use to destroy Canada? No. What they are filibustering and preventing from happening is the finance minister's going to committee to testify on his clear conflict of interest with respect to the Alto project. It is a clear conflict of interest. He has voted on issues that deal with Alto. Alto was in the budget, and the finance minister's partner is an executive at Alto. This is a clear ethical violation.

The minister should be held to account and go to committee, but the Liberals have been filibustering for days to prevent that from happening. Now what are they doing? They are giving themselves a majority on that committee so they do not have to filibuster away accountability anymore. No, they do not have to bother with that because now they have the votes. They just say the minister clearly violated the conflict of interest laws and too bad, he is not going to committee to testify because they have the votes.

• (1825)

Right now, on my committee, the HUMA committee, they have been filibustering, for two days, a document production order. Why do we want documents? We want documents to look into the cost overruns of another Liberal technology project. Everybody remembers ArriveCAN, the tiny project that went massively over budget. This is another IT project that has gone wildly bad under the Liberal government. All we have asked for is for the Liberals to produce some documents. They have spent the last two meetings filibustering that document request. Guess what. If the motion passes, they do not have to filibuster any more. They will have the votes to deny accountability, to deny transparency and to do whatever they want. That is the real reason why we are having changes to committees. They do not like the scrutiny that committees provide.

We have had all kinds of Liberal members wax poetic about the wonders of committee and the work that committees do. Guess what. They do amazing work when there is a minority government and the government can be held to account. We can get the documents that we need. We can have the ministers who have engaged in unethical conduct come before committee and answer for that unethical conduct. We can look at pieces of legislation that have terrible government overreach and we can say that they will not pass without amendment. All of that will now be gone.

As if that is not bad enough, I will go back to what we did earlier today. It was one hour into the debate, a debate about these Liberals taking control of all of the committees so they can ram through their legislative agenda any way they want, with little or no scrutiny. I say that because they can do very simple things. They can bring a programming motion when they put a piece of legislation in the House of Commons, and they can program the amount of time it will spend at committee and have it brought back. They can vote down every single amendment the opposition might want to do. This is a very important debate. This should be debated. They should have extended hours in the House to have this debate. Instead, what did they do? They moved closure.

After one hour, they said they have had enough of the debate. It goes back to what I said when I first opened this speech. When someone says who they are, believe them. They do not believe in an opposition that can hold them to account. They do not, or they would not be resetting the numbers on the accountability committees. If they wanted to, they could say that they are taking control of committees to get their legislative agenda passed. I could maybe understand that, especially if it were six members instead of seven. The committees would then be where they should be and the chair would have to break the tie. It is a Liberal chair. The Liberal chair would break the tie in their favour.

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They are going to seven, which reduces the opportunity for opposition members to speak at committee. They are also doing this for the accountability committees: public accounts, access to information, ethics and government operations. We wonder why they are doing it? We do not have to wonder. They are doing it to avoid scrutiny. They are doing it to avoid accountability. They are not Liberals who believe in any of those things.

I am saying this very clearly right now and I am talking directly to Canadians: Watch what happens over the next year with the Liberals and watch what happens at committee. There will be constant motions to shut down investigations at committee. There will be constant motions in the chamber to shut down debate. There will be programming motions so that things barely go to committee at all. They will not be held to account for ethical violations.

We know that where there is a Liberal government, there are ethical violations. We all remember the ad scam, the green slush fund, arrive scam, name it. When there is money involved, the Liberals get their hands involved and all of that will be silenced by the Liberals.

I think it is an outrage that they would use a closure motion on a motion to take control of committees. It tells us exactly what they are going to do and exactly the kind of government they will be, and it is not what Canadians wanted.

● (1830)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can that member look us in the eye and tell us that if the same thing had happened to the Conservatives, they would not be sitting here with the exact same motion?

Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the motion would be quite different.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon has been in the House since 2011. He has seen a few other stories involving the Liberals in general, but it does not matter which party is in power.

It is very difficult to focus when the chief government whip will not stop talking. If it would be possible to rein him in from time to time, I would appreciate it.

I was saying that my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon has seen many things. I have been here since 2019, and the Liberals have been in a majority government position twice now. The first time was with the support of the NDP, as members will recall. At the time, they used the opportunity to permanently change the Standing Orders of the House by allowing the use of hybrid Parliament, something that would normally have been the subject of discussions among the parties and some consensus at the end of those discussions. However, they decided to ram it through and force it down our throats.

The Liberals now find themselves with a majority, which was obtained through questionable means, and the first thing they do is once again try to get around parliamentary rules and traditions. What does that say about the Liberals in general, and this govern-

ment in particular? I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I think that we are going to see incredible acts of authoritarian overreach by the Liberal government over the next number of years. That will be taking place—

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to interrupt the member. There is a member who has their audio on right now, and it is interrupting the chamber's business.

It is fixed now. I will let the member for Dufferin—Caledon restart because there was an interruption.

● (1835)

Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I think we are going to see the Liberal tendency to use massive, omnibus pieces of legislation, stifle debate and close down investigations at committees or prevent them from starting. This is something we have seen repeatedly over the last number of months. It is something we are going to see increasingly; it is going to accelerate.

The Liberals will not accept amendments from the opposition. They will use things like time allocation motions to shut down debate in the House of Commons. They will use closure motions like they are using on this motion. They will use programming motions that not only shut down debate but also program the amount of time spent in committee so that the legislation avoids scrutiny. This is going to be a catastrophe.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to share an experience that I had today at committee. The Liberals are actually filibustering a motion that we moved at the veterans affairs committee to bring some scrutiny to the spending that is being done in the veterans department. The Liberals are filibustering our motion there and they are taunting us with the fact that, very shortly, they will have a majority on the committee and will be able to shut down our motion at committee.

I am just wondering if the member has any comments about that. We are seeing the Liberals taunting us. What does the member think is going to happen in the coming days?

Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely true. The Liberals are filibustering at the HUMA committee, like I described, to block the production of documents. They are filibustering at the ethics committee to avoid accountability for the finance minister, who is in a conflict of interest. I think we are going to see that increasingly.

One thing that I suspect will also start happening now is that the Liberals will bring motions to go in camera at committee. They are going to say, "Mr. Chair, we would like to move the meeting in camera." For Canadians, this means that for whatever happens in that meeting, we cannot speak about it publicly. The Liberals will do that to avoid further accountability by holding the clause-by-clause review of legislation in camera, so they are not seen voting down opposition amendments. I think that this is going to be an incredible stifling of democracy.

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It is deeply troubling how they are doing this at the accountability committees. If they actually cared about accountability, they would do this at the justice committee or they would do things at the finance committee to get their legislation through. However, they are doing it at the accountability committees, the ones that hold them accountable, without a democratic mandate. These are dark days for democracy in Canada.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this very important motion. I would like to focus primarily on two parts. The first is this idea that somehow the governing party, which now has a majority, does not deserve to have a majority on committees. Then, I would also like to speak to some of what I have been hearing in the House throughout this debate as it relates to floor crossings and their legitimacy, more generally speaking.

The reality of the situation is, if we had just had an election and it produced the numbers that are in the House right now in each party, we would naturally assume that the governing party, which has a majority in the House, would have a majority on committees. That is not a stretch. I think everybody would agree with that.

Let us look at where we are today with the fact that we have recently had some by-elections. We have had some floor crossings. We now have a majority on this side of the House. To suggest that we somehow should not have a majority in committees is, I think, extremely inaccurate and does not honour and pay tribute to the Westminster parliamentary system that we operate within.

The reality is this: We do not get a majority on committees just because we got a majority at the election. We get a majority on committees because a majority of the people who sit in this place, a majority of the members of Parliament, sit in this place on and with the governing party. That is Westminster democracy. That is how it works. That is how it has worked not just since the Confederation of our country, but indeed since Westminster Parliaments, going even further back.

I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

I really reject that notion. I feel that the majority of Conservatives understand this too. To be honest, I feel as though a lot of what we are seeing right now is performative. It is almost as though there is this idea they have to perform in this way, even though they would have done the exact same thing. I asked the member for Dufferin—Caledon moments ago if he could look the Speaker in the eye and tell him that they would not do the exact same thing. That was the closest I have ever gotten to a truthful answer from that member whenever I have asked him one. He was not even able to do that.

All he was able to say was that their motion would have been different. How would it have been different? The mover and the seconder would have been different, perhaps, but that is probably the extent of it. Maybe they would have done something more draconian, like actually remove a Liberal member. They could have done that. We could have done that.

That is not what ended up happening. We are proposing to add two Liberal members. They will say we added two members, so it

is an overreach. Well, how do we achieve the majority on committees? We can either add one member and then have a tie, which is not a majority, or we could take away a Conservative and add one Liberal, and that would give us a majority. However, we can imagine the outrage that would occur if we tried to remove a Conservative.

Let us just imagine the Leader of the Opposition having to make 30 or 35 phone calls to people telling them they are not on committee anymore. That would probably completely seal the deal of the inevitable that is coming to the Leader of the Opposition, which is that he will not be the Leader of the Opposition anymore. This idea that somehow two is an overreach, I think, is extremely disingenuous if we take the time to sit down and look at the math.

I want to shift to the other thing that I want to talk about, and that is more specifically the idea of floor crossings and the idea that these floor crossings are not legitimate. I will read the quote that I read earlier. This is a quote from Stephen Harper when he sat in this seat right in front of me as prime minister. He was asked a question in question period about Bill C-306, which I will reference in a second, and whether or not the Conservatives would support it. This was a bill that would have forced a by-election if somebody crossed the floor.

Stephen Harper said:

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, I believe members of Parliament should have that freedom and be accountable to their constituents for their decisions at the next election. However, in my observation, the only parties that really have this as an obsession are the parties that no one ever crosses to.

The irony about this, because it is a lot richer than just that, is that when it came time to vote for Bill C-306, which was put forward by the NDP, almost all of the Conservative bench voted against it, including the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, who now claims that is what should happen.

• (1840)

Members will remember that in a press conference not long ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that if somebody crosses the floor, there should be a by-election. Well, if that is such a principled stand of his, why did he not vote for Bill C-306? He did not. By the way, there were a couple of Conservative members who did vote for Bill C-306, such as the member from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who still sits in the House. However, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, who was the member for Carleton before, and I know it is a lot to keep track of, voted against it, but now he is suddenly taking a principled stand.

That is because it is not about the principle of the issue. It is about when the principle is convenient, and the principle is convenient to the Leader of the Opposition right now because it suits his desires. However, 10 years ago or 15 years ago, when he had to vote on Bill C-306, it was not a principle of his because he was not in that position. That is the reality of what we are facing right now.

Government Orders

Nobody really believes that floor crossings are illegitimate. It is performative to say that. The Conservatives are getting up here and talking about it as though it were the first time it has ever happened, not only in Canadian democracy but in Westminster Parliaments writ large. It is very common. As a matter of fact, people have crossed to the Conservatives before. In Stephen Harper's own words that I read out, the only people who are obsessed with preventing floor crossings are members of the parties that people are leaving.

It is time for the Conservatives to pause and to do some self-reflection, to focus not on attacking the people who are leaving them but on asking themselves why they are leaving. If the Conservatives were to go through that very simply exercise of trying to figure that out, I am sure they would come to some conclusions that would position them to be a better opposition and a better Conservative Party.

As much as I like to debate and to challenge Conservatives, and I also receive it from them, I also value in the Westminster parliamentary system a strong opposition, because I know that a strong opposition does hold the government to account and challenges the government, directly and indirectly, to do better, to be better, to make better laws and policies and to make the lives of Canadians better. That is why it is so important that we have a strong opposition.

Unfortunately, we do not have that now. The member for Dufferin—Caledon spoke before me, and his entire speech, yet again, and I have been hearing it for 10 years, was about some person doing something and some other person being in breach of something else. The Conservatives should stop focusing on people and focus on the issues. This is what matters to Canadians.

Members would remember that the Conservatives focused on Justin Trudeau relentlessly for 10 years. What did they accomplish by that? The minute he left, they became irrelevant, and they are still sitting in the exact same place they were back then. They can yell and say that they accomplished their goal and did what they set out to do, but at the end of the day, they are still sitting over there because they had nothing to offer.

The only thing the Conservatives offered was criticism of individuals, calling the former prime minister a “trust fund baby” and making up every name they could possibly come up with. They used cheesy slogans, which we heard day after day, rather than coming to the House and giving S. O. 31s on important stuff that was going on in their communities and that they could share with their communities. The Conservatives spent the whole time just attacking people, such as Justin Trudeau and Bill Morneau, rather than discussing the issues.

I mean this as honestly as I can: Canadians deserve an opposition that holds the government accountable to what makes the lives of Canadians better. If we get that, the Conservatives will actually challenge the government, and it will change things.

• (1845)

Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend across the way gave a very passionate speech. He implored us to speak to the issues and not about people, so I want to do that. I want to know in

what realm he thinks it is reasonable to ask for a 60% majority on committees when the majority that the government has is closer to 50%.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, if we could split people into fractions, we might be able to get the percentage to work out more easily, but the reality is that a governing party that has a majority in the House of Commons needs to have a majority on committee. If a majority is 5.2 people, obviously we have to go to six people, because we cannot split people in half. This is pretty simple. I think it is pretty understandable. Not only that, but if we look at 2015, we see that it was the same situation. If we go back and look at Stephen Harper's majority, it was the same thing. We are never going to get the fraction to perfectly line up with the fraction in the House, but it has to be representative as a whole.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the whip's somewhat ridiculous argument, I would say that the Liberals should have about 6.2 people on each committee, and usually when rounding, we round to the nearest whole number. That is six, not seven. We do not round up when the number we are rounding is 6.2. It does not work like that.

He finally let the cat out of the bag earlier in his speech. We heard him express his frustration at how the Conservatives have been acting in recent years. I understand that they have been filibustering a lot and that that has not always been easy for the Liberals, but that is no reason to flout parliamentary decency. That is exactly what the Liberals are doing. They are flouting parliamentary decency and failing to respect the rules and traditions of Parliament.

I would like my colleague opposite, the government whip, to explain why the Liberals suddenly feel as though they have the right to flout the rules and traditions of Parliament and use their majority to take control of committees, including the ones where the government has to be accountable to the people.

• (1850)

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I take some offence to my comments' being called ridiculous, especially with what the Bloc Québécois put Elections Canada through recently. However, I will put that aside for a second and try to answer the member's question.

It is completely normal and completely acceptable to suggest that we would redefine committees. I ask the Bloc this question: If the Bloc ever had a majority in the House, which I guess is technically impossible, but if it did, would its members not do the exact same thing, just like the Conservatives would? This conversation is pretty much moot. Everybody would do the exact same thing, because it is a reasonable thing, and it is a thing Canadians expect to happen when a governing party has a majority in the House.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take a bit of leeway to recognize that April is Sikh Heritage Month in Canada and to say that on Parliament Hill today are the organizers of the largest Nagar Kirtan outside India. I just want to acknowledge the fact that they are here and to thank them for the fine work they do.

Government Orders

The question I have for my colleague is in regard to the principle that if a party has a majority of the seats on the floor of the House of Commons, it should have the majority in the standing committees. It is in our rules. It is the parliamentary practice and procedures, and a part of our heritage. In fact, it is so for the British Commonwealth. Could the member provide his thoughts on just how important that is?

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct, and it is not unique to Canada. It is the practice we have had in Westminster Parliaments throughout the world. Having a majority on committees needs to be reflected if a party has a majority in the House of Commons.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the chief government whip for representing the largest riding in Canada by population. I am not sure if he is aware of that.

The member cited a number of examples of precedents of floor crossing. However, he acknowledged that it is unprecedented that we now have a majority government by a combination of by-elections and floor crossings. Obviously, the by-elections change nothing, but would the member acknowledge that this is the first time a minority has tipped to a majority due to floor crossings and that this is a result of an orchestrated campaign from the Prime Minister's Office?

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the only reason the member knows I represent the riding with the largest population is that he represents the second-largest, and I believe his used to be the largest.

I will agree with the member on the first point. This is the first time that I have found, not just in Canada but in Westminster Parliaments generally, when this has happened, but that does not make it illegitimate. On the second point, I would encourage the Conservatives to take off the tinfoil hats and stop the conspiracy theories about backroom deals and stuff. The member can tell me what the people who crossed the floor have received. I am not aware of anything.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, greetings to all my colleagues.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to and debate Motion No. 9, which seeks to make changes to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons now that the Liberal Party has the majority of the seats in the House of Commons because some members changed their party affiliation and because of the three victories our party secured in the by-elections.

The Westminster parliamentary tradition is absolutely clear. The composition of parliamentary committees must reflect the number of seats that the different parties hold in the House of Commons. Therefore, with 174 seats, the Liberal Party now holds a clear majority. We have four more seats than all the opposition parties combined.

[*English*]

It is important to recognize that there is a long-standing parliamentary tradition, which is what Motion No. 9 put forward by the

government House leader seeks to accomplish: to change the Standing Orders.

How did we get here? I think that is important. Right now, the Prime Minister is governing the country in a very difficult and uncertain world.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

When I talk with my constituents, I find that they have many concerns about world events: the war in the Middle East, issues related to free trade between Canada and the United States and the relationship between our two countries in general, as well as the importance of fostering economic growth here in Canada.

However, for most of my constituents, and I say this to all my colleagues, the Prime Minister and his government are positioned in the centre of the ideological spectrum, and Canadians, in general, are encouraged by the government's current performance.

[*English*]

The proof is in the pudding. We have talked about the fact there is a long-standing tradition that in Canada, and frankly in any jurisdiction where there is a Westminster style of government or Parliament, voters elect members of Parliament. I have heard a lot of narrative from the Conservatives about how Canadians elected a minority Parliament. Yes, with the 343 members of Parliament at the time, that was the case. However, members of Parliament have always had the ability to determine where they are best placed in the composition of the House. I think that is important.

We have had a lot of conversations about the role of party leaders and party discipline in the country. If we are going to get into a situation where we are going to take away the inherent right for members of Parliament to choose their party affiliation, we are consolidating even more a leader's prerogative with particular political parties. I think MPs should have the ability to make their own judgment and their own calculation.

These decisions do not come easily, and they are relatively rare. In fact, with respect to what we have seen in Canadian history, this is quite unique, but it is a moment when I think the Prime Minister is governing a big-tent coalition. That is evidenced by the fact that members of Parliament who have previously been affiliated with the NDP or with the Conservative Party have made the choice to join the Liberal Party under his leadership.

[*Translation*]

There were three by-elections: in Terrebonne, University—Rosedale and Scarborough Southwest. All three resulted in the election of new members of the House, who are here with us today. They were sworn in this morning. This is a positive result for us, and I would like to welcome my new colleagues.

The government has outlined the privileges available to the Liberal caucus for amending the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

Government Orders

[English]

It is instructive as well that the government whip took us down a bit of a path of history about Bill C-306. At the time, it would have been a bill before the 42nd Parliament, I believe, where a number of members of Parliament, some of whom still sit in the House, made their decision about whether to support that bill, which was around putting an automatic by-election if a member of Parliament were to cross the floor. The government whip I thought did a great job highlighting the fact that former prime minister Stephen Harper felt at that time it was not necessary, that this was not a major public policy concern in our system.

I would agree to this day that this still, as I have already asserted, should be the role of a member of Parliament, and I know no one takes those decisions lightly. The Conservatives have kind of talked about this idea of backroom deals. I can be a prime example. It started with a conversation at Shooters Bar & Grill with the hon. member for Acadie—Annapolis. There have been a number of disparate conversations that Liberal members have had. Again, I think it is a reflection of when members of Parliament go back into their ridings and the Prime Minister and his government have an approval—

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the hon. member.

Does the hon. member for Drummond have a point of order?

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have moved a motion that will muzzle Parliament. I wonder whether there are enough of us to have this discussion or whether we are doing all this for nothing.

The Deputy Speaker: This is a quorum call. I will check how many members are in the House.

And the count having been taken:

I believe we now have quorum. I will therefore ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister to continue his speech.

• (1900)

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for ensuring that more members join us here in the House of Commons to listen to my excellent speech today on Motion No. 9. This is very important, and I appreciate a large crowd being here for me.

[English]

Again, I think that the government is simply exercising the Westminster tradition. I would reject the premise we have heard from the Conservatives about the idea that this is orchestrated. This is members of Parliament going back into their riding with a government with a 70% approval rating among Canadians, saying that this is the type of leadership they want to see.

I would echo some of the comments of the chief government whip, who respectfully challenged the opposition about the fact that there are important conversations inside that party, inside that caucus, about how best to position themselves. I do not think it is lamenting the idea that there have been members of Parliament in that caucus, for whatever reason, whether it is the Prime Minister's leadership or perhaps leadership issues with the leader of the offi-

cial opposition, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, who have made those decisions. Those are important conversations that I know my hon. friends on the other side will have so they can do the good work of His Majesty's loyal opposition to hold the government to account.

We are obviously here talking about the Standing Orders. While I am on my feet, I did not have the opportunity to join the debate when there was general debate on the Standing Orders, and I think this is tight enough within Motion No. 9 for me to opine on it. We have an opportunity to revisit some of the Standing Orders in a more expansive way. I take notice the government House leader has done this on committee composition. I would love to see the Speaker or individuals who are in the chair, during question period, for example, have a little more latitude. I see this in the United Kingdom, where there is about three-quarters of a list, so to speak, where government party leaders will be able to put forward suggested names. Of course, there is an idea of when someone might get a question, but then afterward, the Speaker has the ability to catch the eye of any member of Parliament. I think that is something we should be introducing into our system.

Members do not clap in the Westminster system in London unless it is a real ceremonious occasion. Notwithstanding the fact that I love our Prime Minister and I think he is doing a good job, and I am sure the leader of the official opposition appreciates the clap, I do not think it is needed. I think we could say “hear, hear” and bang the desk a little, but I do not think we need to be clapping. That is actually in the standing orders in the U.K.

The last piece is the second chamber. In Westminster, there is a definitive second chamber to allow for specialized debates on topics. MPs can go into a committee room in the Palace of Westminster, where it is on the record. Constituents can actually see those debates. The chamber is not always busy, and I am an active member in this place, but it allows for an ability to have more members able to share their piece.

The last thing is Private Members' Business. I think we should have a dedicated day for Private Members' Business in the House. Yes, we have hours that are kind of connected throughout the week. I think a larger block of time that could be strictly dedicated to Private Members' Business would be smart. We could make additional amendments. I will leave that for the PROC committee.

I look forward to taking questions from my hon. colleagues.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way has, at times, criticized me in this chamber for not lauding the government's efforts at supporting industries in my riding, and so I want to congratulate the government for hitting a single when it extended accelerated depreciation to the greenhouse industry. However, with the new-found majority the Liberals are proposing to find at committees, would he attempt, with his government, to hit a home run and extend that accelerated depreciation across all of the industries that are hurting, because the Prime Minister did not get a deal with our neighbour of the south, as promised last July?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the banter I have with the hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

Government Orders

I will remind the hon. member, first of all, that we do have a trade deal with the United States. It is called CUSMA, and 85% of our products go into the United States tariff-free. We are continuing to make the case to the U.S. administration that we feel section 232 tariffs are unjustified and are against the spirit of that agreement.

However, I am glad the member mentioned the immediate expensing for greenhouses. I would suggest to him, humbly, if I look back over time, that this may be one of the most significant federal policies to that member's riding in the sense that Leamington is the heart of the greenhouse sector in North America. These are major capital expenditures, and we think this is a policy that will help support his communities in the days ahead. I know he will be sharing this with his constituents.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Kings—Hants can thank me. Because of me, he had a slightly larger audience during his speech. Half of them left afterward, but that was down to him. He will have to manage that with his colleagues. The other comment we heard while you were counting members was that I was interrupting the debate. If there is no one to debate, there is no debate; it is called a monologue. Government members have to be present for a debate to happen.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said, "We are proposing to adjust committee membership proportionally to reflect the party standings in the House."

If we did that proportionally, the Liberals would be entitled to 6.2% or 6.3% representation in committee. As anyone who has done first-year high school math knows, that would be rounded to the nearest whole number. In this case, Liberal representation in committee would therefore amount to six members. How does my colleague explain the creative math that his leader and his government used to calculate party representation in committee?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to have 6.2 members per committee. Tradition dictates that the composition of committees reflect that of the House. For example, if the Liberal Party holds a majority of seats here in the House of Commons, then of course it is possible to have a majority vote. Parliamentary committees need to reflect that reality. That is why we need seven Liberal members on each parliamentary committee and not six. That will also enable the Conservatives to maintain the same level of representation at committee.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member would know that, since the last federal election, we have had a Prime Minister and a government that have talked a great deal about the issue of collaboration and working to elevate good ideas into good public policy, and today is a good example of that.

Today, yes, we got an official majority. Three members were sworn in. We got to 174 members, but the first action taken today was actually the passage of a Conservative private member's bill. It is good legislation. It fit into the crime agenda that this Prime Min-

ister and this government have been talking about. Does he not see that collaboration can, in fact, be effective even in majorities?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, of course, yes.

This being the first time I have sat as a member of Parliament where we are actually in a majority situation, I have seen the good work that has happened over minorities. I know that will continue in a majority context. At the end of the day, regardless of the party's standing in the House of Commons, we are here to serve Canadians. There are great ideas on all sides of this House. I have great relationships on all sides. I know we will continue to work collaboratively where it makes sense for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Midnapore.

I am pleased to take part in today's debate in the House on Government Motion No. 9. However, I am very unhappy with what this motion will do, particularly as the result will fundamentally redefining the work of MPs for the remainder of this Parliament.

The parliamentary committee work that MPs do is very important for our democracy and must reflect the wishes and choices expressed by voters in the last election. That being said, Canadians chose a minority Liberal government, and therefore a government under close scrutiny. Canadians' wisdom should be reflected in a committee composition and a distribution of seats in accordance with the will of the people. Committee work requires a certain degree of collegiality and mutual respect. Motion No. 9 would bring back a great deal of partisanship. It would give absolute power to the government and, by so doing, would undermine non-partisan work in the service of Canadians.

I would like to highlight the work of the clerks and analysts and the technical support provided by all the staff involved in the work of parliamentary committees. Drafting reports, hearing from witnesses and engaging in parliamentary work are the bulwark of democracy. They honour Canadians and make Canada a better country.

However, when a majority decides to impose a unilateral vision without any compromise, this work comes to reflect a single party's ideology and becomes a pale imitation of what it once was. For us conscientious MPs, the most important part of parliamentary work is helping Canadians so that our government services evolve over time and are always being improved.

I have been around for several Parliaments, with both majority and minority governments. When drafting their reports, it has always been important for committees to ensure that Canadians' views are heard and considered. That is how committees come up with fair and transparent recommendations that will help us in this monumental task of ensuring our country's prosperity.

Government Orders

I am deeply concerned about what will happen in the months following the adoption of Motion No. 9, particularly with regard to how committees will operate going forward. Members who serve in committee derive their motivation from knowing that they have done their job well. However, in the coming years, we are going to find ourselves in a situation where committee reports will not be representative and will become meaningless because of the problems caused by the numerical superiority. This important work, which currently reflects MPs' opinions and talents and the views of Canadians, will be interpreted through a Liberal lens and will thus lose its substance and fail to reflect Canadians' reality. That is not to mention all the parliamentary committee resources that will be wasted. The expertise of Canadians from across the country will be disregarded to protect the Liberal government's ideology.

I have received many testimonials from people who are genuinely concerned about the government's drift away from democracy. Just yesterday, a 21-year-old young worker in my riding told me, "It makes no sense. Basically, what is the point of my vote if, afterwards, everyone changes their mind and does exactly the opposite of what they said? I have no say? Is voting even worth it at this point? That tells me that my vote does not matter and that politics is extremely biased. I no longer see the purpose of voting."

I can say that millions of Canadians are feeling the same way and this is fuelling cynicism about our democracy and our institutions. Today, I ask Canadians what they think. Do they believe their vote counts? Do they believe that Canada is best served when the make-up of our institutions reflects the outcome of our elections? The Liberal's Motion No. 9 will only fuel this cynicism and cause great harm to our country in the short, medium and long term.

● (1910)

I urge the government to reconsider before it is too late and not to proceed with this motion. This whole situation is all the more concerning given that, this week, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics released a report recommending that the Prime Minister divest his investments and shares in Brookfield, a firm that manages nearly \$1 trillion in assets. His close ties to that company, where he served as vice chair for two and a half years before entering the race for the Liberal leadership, place the Prime Minister in a multitude of potential conflicts of interest. This is an unprecedented situation, but that is the reality. Thanks to some tremendous work, the committee has formulated 20 recommendations for resolving this ongoing conflict of interest.

Unfortunately, this is the kind of study that will no longer be possible with the restructuring of the committees. These kinds of studies will now be nipped in the bud by the government before witnesses can be heard. That is why the amendment proposed by my colleague, the member for Barrie South—Innisfil, aimed at exempting the ethics, public accounts, and government operations committees, is so important. Allowing opposition parties to do their job on these committees and hold the government to account is the bare minimum. These committees exist to ensure government transparency and to prevent corruption. The ideal remains that this government respect the will of Canadians as expressed in the general election of April 28, 2025, less than a year ago, and that the committees continue to reflect that democratic will.

I can already hear the Liberals responding with their polls and other nonsense. I can say that, in Canada, there is only one poll that counts and that is an election. It is the only way to guarantee with certainty the will of Canadians. It is not a sample of 1,000 respondents to a poll that will give this Liberal government the right to override democracy. I do not know if that is a word that the Prime Minister likes, as he seems to think our parliamentary institutions are fairly burdensome, or rather a necessary evil. That may be why he prefers to travel all over the world, everywhere but Canada. However, the Prime Minister must remember that, for our democracy to work, we must nurture it. We must take personal initiative and exchange ideas.

Motion No. 9 destroys that trust in the ability of parliamentarians to do meaningful work for their communities. If this motion passes, it means that the Liberals have no intention of working collaboratively with their colleagues. It means that they want to impose their agenda without working collaboratively with the opposition parties. Even though the Leader of the Opposition has reached out to the Prime Minister to work collaboratively on the issue of U.S. tariffs, the Liberals have no intention of working collaboratively. Lastly, it means that the Liberals reward backroom dealings and secret agreements over the normal, transparent process of Parliament and committees, which reflects the will of Canadians.

In any case, I find this situation absolutely shameful, and I hope Canadians will remember it when the next election rolls around. Regardless of which way the vote on this motion goes, I ask Canadians not to lose heart. I ask them to continue to believe that change is possible, that there are still some honest politicians and that Liberal arrogance does not define the current state of our country.

I solemnly pledge, as do all other Conservative MPs, to continue to fight every day, in every way possible, to represent our constituents by fulfilling the mandate entrusted to us; to fight to give Canadian workers their purchasing power back; to rebuild the strongest middle class in the world, which we had under the Harper government; to bring safety and order back to our streets; to restore a government that respects farmers, their land and their trade, because they feed us all; to restore entrepreneurs' belief that it is worthwhile to invest in Canada and to encourage innovation without being overtaxed on the wealth they create; and to restore the dream of home ownership for young people.

We will fight this fight every day.

Government Orders

• (1915)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since Canadian Confederation, we have had majority governments and we have had minority governments. In terms of the motion that we are debating, all we are debating is whether, if a party has a majority of the seats on the floor of the House of Commons, it gets a majority of the positions, the votes, on a standing committee. For majority governments throughout our history, even if we go back into the Commonwealth, that is a basic principle. There are opposition tools. I understand the tools. I was in opposition for 20-plus years when we combine my entire parliamentary experience.

Opposition still has the ability to hold the government accountable. Why are the Conservatives so fearful? Are they concerned that they do not have the ability as other Conservative parties have in the past?

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, on April 28, 2025, Canadians voted for a minority Liberal government. That is what Canadians wanted. In their wisdom, Canadian wanted to keep this government under close supervision and hold it accountable. Unfortunately, the government is now using Motion No. 9 to stop Canadians from getting what they want.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the world is upside down. We are experiencing something never seen before because this is the first time it has happened in Canada's history. A government elected as a minority has managed to persuade members from different parties to join its minority government ranks and transform it into a majority government.

Not only that, but the government wants to change the committees' composition. It calls it a matter of tradition. In addition to expanding the committees by not just one but two additional government members, the government will be reducing the opposition parties' speaking time.

Is my colleague concerned that he might not be able to uncover potential new scandals?

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, this is a scandal in itself, but what saddens me most is that the Liberals, through their actions, are building a case for political cynicism in Canada. Let me remind everyone: Canadians elected a Liberal minority government. We now have a Liberal majority government, not because Canadians chose it, but because of defections.

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals now have a majority and have decided to secure a majority on committees by adding not one, but two members per committee. If that is not an abuse of power, I honestly do not know what is.

Can my colleague explain why, under a Conservative government, we would never have dared to do such a thing?

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I can assure him that we have never dared to go as far as the Liberals have. I have to emphasize the word “never”.

The Liberals have broken democracy. They are going to foster cynicism. I read a message last night from a young man who took the time to write to me, and he said he may never vote again in his life because of the Liberals' tactics. Has anyone thought about the cynicism this could foster across Canada if this situation affects hundreds of thousands of people who will say that it is not worth voting because Parliament does not respect the will of Canadians? This goes too far.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, can the member honestly say that if the party had 172 seats, and then a Liberal walked across the floor, that the Conservatives would not want to make any changes? They would not want to adhere to parliamentary tradition and allow the government to have a majority on a committee, even if they did not have a majority on the floor? That is just silly.

[*Translation*]

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, this will not take long and I will answer honestly. Shame on the Liberals. Shame on them for what they are doing right now. They may be destroying democracy in Canada for future generations.

[*English*]

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the incredible citizens of Calgary Midnapore.

We are here today to debate Motion No. 9, a motion that causes a lot of concern not only for me and for my movement but for many citizens across Canada, citizens who cast their vote believing that it mattered, that their vote would be reflected in the composition of not only the House but also committees.

We find, with Motion No. 9, that this is not the will of the government, even though it was the will of the people, the will of the citizens. These changes would be thrust upon committees without the will of the citizens who voted for representatives to represent them not only in the House but in committees as well. I find this particularly troubling for three reasons. The first is that, in the words of the CBC, there is a complete lack of accountability.

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This is a government that needs accountability. The Liberals have failed to deliver for Canadians on a number of fronts, and Canadians continue to feel the pain of their decisions across their lives. We hear, consistently, about the trouble with the cost of living, and with groceries in particular. Every time I go to the grocery store, I am surrounded by citizens who are scared to put items in their grocery basket because they are not certain they can afford them. I think of purchasing a simple item like a basket of berries. We cannot even do this now for less than \$10 usually. It is encroaching upon a double-digit dollar number just to purchase a basket of berries. The same goes for meat. There was a time, coming from Alberta, that citizens could enjoy our wonderful beef without concern. Now this is seen as a luxury. It is a result of the government doing a terrible job of managing the cost of living with their policies.

As well, we have seen this reflected recently in fuel prices. Fuel is something we have an abundant amount of here in this great country of Canada. I personally do not accept the idea that there is a global shortage and that Canadians should have to suffer. If the government had been doing its job over the last decade, it would have put in place the infrastructure and the mechanisms so that we would have an endless supply of fuel instead of, now, forcing our citizens to compensate for its lack of oversight over the last decade. That is before we even talk about the carbon tax that the Liberals imposed and the industrial carbon tax that remains.

The result of this, of course, is low productivity. We know that the U.S. has beaten Canada in productivity. It limits wage gains for workers significantly, resulting in high unemployment rates. It is no wonder that Canada lost 100,000 jobs in a single month and that our rate of unemployment continues to hover in the high sixes and low sevens. It is a result of poor policies of a government that requires accountability.

Our productivity gap has become so acute in the last eight years that, according to numbers that have been cited, Canadian business productivity slipped 0.6% from 2017 to 2024, and nearly half of last year's inflow came through mergers and acquisitions of existing Canadian businesses, well above the historical norm of around one-third. That is not new capital creation. It is not adding anything to our economy. It is not adding jobs for our young Canadian citizens.

Today, the announcement of the sovereign capital fund is just ridiculous because there is nothing to go into the fund. Other nations that have created this kind of fund had a surplus. Instead, here, we see a history of deficits.

• (1925)

For every consecutive year, since 2015, there has been a deficit. We see that again this past fiscal year with one of \$80 billion. We do not know what to expect tomorrow, but we are concerned and worried. Nearly 80% of Canadians are saying that the cost of living outpaces their income. The government demands accountability. The fact it is creating these committee rules to not allow for this accountability is absolutely by design so it will not be held accountable by the official opposition.

Second, this is a government that talks a good game about team Canada, but it really wants to do things by itself. It really does not want us to have the team Canada approach. Anyone who has any

ideas that are not the Liberals' are deemed un-Canadian. It is absolutely insulting to the so many Canadians who have ideas that are different from theirs.

The Liberals said that we were not working with them in their effort to achieve things for Canadians. This is also not true. We passed Bill C-5, which gave them carte blanche to achieve anything they possibly wanted to, yet we are stalled out again with respect to major projects and achieving things for Canadians. They are driving the unity crisis as a result of this type of mentality, which has played out in the creation of these committees.

I received a note this week: "I am so disappointed in our so-called democratic system. What a clown show. There is nothing democratic about floor crossing. When is this nonsense going to end? Who is overseeing this, and when will they fall in their job? Let's just start with the lack of answers during the question and period segments. When a question is asked, it should be obligatory to provide an intelligent reply that actually relates to the question and not merely dodges the question. The Prime Minister should be removed from office for his endless conflicts of interest. I can't wait for October 19th to vote for an independent Alberta." That is what the government is driving with its authoritarianism, and that includes this committee constitution motion.

I will also point out that the Prime Minister literally won office because he promised Canadians that he would be the individual who could get a deal with the U.S., but to date we have yet to see it. We have only seen his ever-changing position on the trade deal with our neighbours to the south. During the leadership race, he said that dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs by Canada should be given and should be aimed where their impacts in the United States would be felt the hardest. Then, on July 15, 2025, he said that a trade deal with Trump without tariffs is unlikely because there is not a lot of evidence right now that the U.S. is willing to make one. Again, he ran on this and he has not gotten a deal for us.

In October, he said, "We are still negotiating further gains in [our] major sectors". He also said, "As we speak, our team is negotiating. This is just not words. We will get a deal." Then, in November, he said, "Who cares?" He said that we would make a deal as it was necessary, saying "It's a detail.... I'll speak to him again when it matters." I will tell the House that it matters to Canadians. Then, as of this week, he said, "Many of our former strengths, based on our close ties to America, have become [our] weaknesses", but just three days later he said, "We can come to a mutually successful outcome."

As I said, the Prime Minister won the election with the promise that he would get a deal for Canadians. The government talks a good game about wanting us to work together, but really he, as described by the CBC, is "authoritarian". This move to take control of committees points to that.

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I will say that the third and final reason is that it is fundamentally undemocratic that committees are constructed in this format. The government got 169 seats in the last election, which is 43.76% of the popular vote, with the CPC getting 144, which is 41.31%. In the words of the CBC, this is overreach. It has an authoritarian streak. Canadians did not ask for this, so it should not be done.

• (1930)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot there. Let me provide a quick commentary.

First of all, when it comes to the Canada-U.S. deal, I can tell the member what we will not do is what one of the Conservative MPs did. He visited with the vice-president, then he came back and said Canada was just having an "anti-American hissy fit". Canada, the Prime Minister and this government will focus on getting the best deal we can for Canada. That is the bottom line.

In regards to this whole conspiracy aspect, it is a very simple, straightforward process. If a party gets a majority of the seats in the House of Commons, it gets a majority of the seats in the standing committees. That is the way it has been historically. That is the way it is administered in the Commonwealth.

In terms of this whole sense of co-operation, from the very beginning the Prime Minister and this government have indicated that we want to see collaboration. After all, remember, we have the majority government today, with 174 members. For our first action, we actually passed a Conservative private member's bill. Is that —

• (1935)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not appreciate being gaslit, as this member is doing.

Forty-one per cent of Canadians voted for an official opposition, so they would like to see that reflected accurately within the make-up of the committees. I will point out that our member actually got more meetings than his Prime Minister. The member should think about that.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary just referred to parliamentary tradition. It is a parliamentary tradition that we proceed by consensus when it comes to establishing the composition of committees. Up until now, the Liberals have said in their speeches that they would ask for input and collaborate. However, on the first day that the Liberals won a majority, they chose to act unilaterally to change the rules by introducing a closure motion without consulting the opposition members, including anyone in my political party.

What does my hon. colleague think about that?

Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I think that this is only the beginning, that what we are witnessing is step one. We will see how things develop in the next few months or years. As undemocratic as it may be, I think that opposition members have to prepare for the fact that even though things are just getting started, we should probably expect more actions like these to come.

[*English*]

Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member highlighted a lot of areas.

We know that with the stolen seats that the Liberals recently acquired from opposition members, they now have 50.8% of the seats in this House. What they are trying to do with this motion is acquire 58.3% of the seats in committees. That is actually very unreasonable. They are looking to have seven out of 12 members be Liberal members. Why would they not be happy with six out of 11?

If the Liberals are so bent on having control of the voting, why do they not give up the chairmanship of those committees? Then they could have control of the votes. Would that not make them happy, if they had maybe 54% of the representation instead of 58%?

Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, it is better not to give them more ideas as to the abuse of our democracy and the democratic process. The Liberals are capable of coming up with these types of ideas on their own.

Again, it is such a sad day for Canadians because they did not vote for this and they did not ask for this. They asked for an official opposition that has all of the powers and the benefits of being the official opposition, and that was stolen from us today.

Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member has a lot of history working in the field of trade and so on. She mentioned team Canada. Whether we have a majority or not, I am not sure why she could not still work with us to make sure we get the best deal for Canada.

Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member's leader to be honest with Canadians next time, that he did not have that capacity or that capability. He has not met his own deadline several times over. We are willing to work with him and with them, but they are clearly incapable of getting it done. Next time, they could just be honest about this.

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and pleasure to rise on behalf of the good people of Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, whether they be in SDG, Cornwall or Akwesasne to give a summary of what their views are. I will take about 116,000 people's views and summarize them all in the next 15 or 20 minutes. I tried to get a pretty good pulse of the community. There has certainly been a lot of discussion about the legislation before us, with the Liberals looking to give themselves a majority on committees. How they got that majority has been the talk of the town in my part of eastern Ontario, to say the least, particularly in the last couple of weeks.

I like to say I get my meals and miles in here around SDG on the weekends, going to different community events. Last Saturday, I was at King George Restaurant with a local resident having breakfast, talking and getting his feedback on some issues of the day. People at two separate tables asked me specifically what is going on with the floor crossings and how it is allowed to happen that the Liberals are going to give themselves a majority simply through floor crossings. This past weekend, I was in South Lancaster at a breakfast supporting the Guelph Medical Brigades and at some business openings and celebrations in Morrisburg and Winchester. I got a lot of feedback at the North Dundas Local Business Expo. Then, of course, I was at the Glengarry Agricultural Hall of Fame in Maxwell. I name-drop all of those places to show that there was a wide diversity of places I had the chance to go to this past Saturday alone.

The feedback to me several times was concern about these recent floor crossings and how the Liberals have obtained their majority. People are dismayed by this. If I put to use my political science degree from Carleton going back a couple of years now, never in Canadian history have we seen this happen before. Just a year ago, the Prime Minister was given a minority government mandate. The Liberals were not given a majority but a minority mandate, meaning that they had to work with other opposition parties to pass legislation. At committee, they would not have a majority of seats, but, rather, a minority of seats. For the scrutiny of government legislation, the production of documents and efforts by the opposition party to hold the government to account, we were given key tools to do exactly that.

I want to be very clear with Canadians. It was not the recent three by-elections that gave the Liberals their majority. The seats for University—Rosedale, Scarborough Southwest and Terrebonne in Quebec were already Liberal-held seats, and they remain Liberal seats. Whether it was one vote, 1,000 votes, 2,000 votes or 12 votes, the point is those three seats were Liberal seats and they remain Liberal seats. The only reason the Liberals are able to bring forward changes to the Standing Orders in Government Orders is because of floor crossings. Constituents and Canadians did not have a say in this. Canadians gave Liberals a minority government, in which they would have to work with opposition parties and the opposition would have key tools, including at committee, to hold them to account. Never before in Canadian history has a Prime Minister made a backroom deal by getting floor crossers to take them to a majority government.

We talk about distrust in our institution and the frustration of Canadians at the ballot box. There are tens of thousands of people who voted Conservative and, in one case, voted NDP who, through no say of their own, but only after the fact, had members cross the floor, making their own selfish decision to do so. It has dismayed voters and taken away the valid votes of tens of thousands of people in the election that was held just a year ago. I will speak to those on the Conservative side who crossed the floor. Let me make it very clear that they ran under the Conservative leader, the Conservative platform and the Conservative plan. They knew exactly what that was and had no problem being on the ballot. They should remain in that case and maintain their word on that, but I will not say too much more on that.

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What is important about the legislation before us now, the changes to the Standing Orders, is committee composition. The Liberals now want to go from having a minority on the committee to adding two members from their side to give themselves a majority on every single committee. It is absolutely shameful.

● (1940)

They argue that it is to advance their agenda. This is what they say, but here is the problem and here is the thing. If it is a budget bill that comes forward, it would go to the finance committee. If there is a bill on elections and we have amendments to the Election Act, that is going to go through to the House and procedural affairs committee, PROC. If it is a crime bill, it goes to the justice and public safety committee. If it is on natural resources, it goes to the natural resources committee. The transport committee looks after any bills that deal with transport, and so on and so forth.

There are three things that show us how obsessed they are with taking complete control and squandering an opportunity for the opposition to have leverage to get documents, to get answers, to get ministers to appear at committee and to hold the government to account.

They are not only taking majority stakes in those committees that I mentioned, such as finance, House and procedural affairs, natural resources and transport, but also taking majorities in our three oversight committees. Let us be very clear about those oversight committees. We have an amendment on the books that we are hoping the Liberals will agree to. It does not sound like they are going to because they, again, are absolutely determined to have complete control with 50.8% of the seats. They are going to have a much bigger sway, as they are going to take about 58%, as my colleagues have just mentioned, of the seats at the committee table. They are going to take over these oversight committees.

None of these three oversight committees, be it public accounts, government operations, or the ethics committee, deal with government legislation. They are oversight committees that hold the government to account. They are chaired by opposition members.

The public accounts committee goes through and scrutinizes line by line the government's spending. I spent some time on that committee in the last Parliament. One of the best parts was that it reviews the Auditor General reports. A very key part of the work of parliamentarians is to look at the independent Auditor General, see what they are saying about government audits, services and programs, and make suggestions and improvements to the way the government operates programs. This also gives the opposition an opportunity to highlight the shortcomings of the government.

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The government operations committee obviously looks after the operations and studies the operations of the government, as well as the financing, the spending and the plans going forward for that. Of course, it is one of the most important committees we have here, and it is a very busy committee because of the Liberal government we have in office. The ethics committee is tasked with eroding and eliminating corruption in government. That is a tall order for those parliamentarians on that committee.

What we are saying through our reasonable amendment is that we should look to keep the structure as is for the three oversight committees. They do not pass legislation. They will not be blocking any legislation that goes through. They are pure oversight. They are key tools for opposition. They are key tools for accountability, and they are key tools for holding the government to account. We are going to keep the government doing exactly that. We are going to try our best with the tools we have, but we need as many tools as we can get, and we need the tools Canadians sent us here with in this Parliament, electing a minority government where the Liberals do not have full reign.

This is important because they will filibuster until no end to block themselves from having accountability on a wide variety of topics. We need to look back no further than the last time they had a majority. They got a majority through the ballot box, not like we are seeing this time, with them getting it through floor crossings.

We can take a look back at the WE Charity scandal. We can take a look back at the SNC-Lavalin affair, which was one of the ones I remember at the justice committee. Particularly, SNC-Lavalin was during the last majority government. It was a significant issue of corruption. It was a major political issue, and the Liberals did all they could at the justice committee to dither, delay and filibuster Canadians getting information and parliamentarians, particularly opposition members, getting access to testimony from relevant ministers who were involved and key documents that were involved. Canadians know what the end result of that has been.

Majority or minority, it is always difficult to get answers out of the Liberal government because, if we look at the WE Charity scandal, that was the \$912-million contract that was given to Liberal friends, where former prime minister Trudeau and his family were given paid speaking engagements by that organization, which is a massive conflict of interest. The WE Charity scandal was blocked time and time again, filibustered endlessly, but it was a minority government that we tried to hold to account as best we could.

- (1945)

We need as much accountability, scrutiny and transparency as we can possibly get when it comes to the Liberal government.

Think of the arrive scam app, which was discovered through parliamentary committee. In a minority setting, we were able to force through the production of documents, getting key testimony and understanding the massive abuse of taxpayers' money under the Liberals' watch. An app and a program that was supposed to cost \$80,000, and we were told could have been done over the course of a weekend, ended up ballooning over to \$60 million.

The more we dug on GC Strategies, despite the Liberals' attempts to block and swerve away and try to avoid the issue, it was

in the minority setting that we were able to go and get answers and testimony from GC Strategies. We learned it did little to no work on many of the invoices it submitted, and it was an absolute scandal, which is the nicest thing I could say about that.

In the scandal of the Winnipeg lab documents during COVID, the access to those documents was blocked and stonewalled. The House of Commons had to take the Liberal government to court, if we recall, to get access to those documents. The Liberals stubbornly delayed on that effort.

In the last Parliament, again, if those scandals did not add up to be enough, we cannot forget the green slush fund and the \$300 million given. Liberal insiders were appointed to the board. In an almost incestuous environment, board members were approving their own applications to the tune of tens of millions of dollars collectively given to each other and there were conflicts of interest galore. If not for the tools that we were given in the minority setting to uncover this corruption, I worry that Canadians would not have gotten the answers they needed in those situations.

That is why it is absolutely essential that we do what we can, and we are going to fight to keep these committees as Canadians elected them, in a minority setting. Do not let a few floor crossers give a majority and steal the accountability that we need.

We need to keep the committee structure as is because of what is going to be forthcoming in investigating Liberal scandals. Let us look only at the last couple of weeks, where we need more answers on Liberal spending. The \$300-million PrescribeIT program was software that was supposed to eliminate fax prescriptions across the country. The Liberals spent \$300 million of taxpayers' money before quietly attempting to throw the program away into the garbage, not to be used at all. Who made the decision to spend \$300 million? Who got the money? How was this allowed to balloon to the cost that it did? Even after the Liberals renewed funding, it was a failed program and they still dumped tens of millions of dollars into it. Right there are 300 million reasons for why we need to have the proper parliamentary committee scrutiny to get to the bottom of this on the oversight committees and the others that are studying it.

Of course, there is the other news. If \$300 million of wasted money uncovered in the last couple of weeks was not enough, there is another \$200 million in a recent deal signed for the Maritime Launch Services: \$20 million per year over the next 10 years for a launch pad in rural Nova Scotia. The more we learn about this, the more it stinks. A former Liberal Nova Scotia premier is on the board and Liberal insiders were leading the effort to get this contract. Whenever members go out and take a look at this, it is a gravel pit with a concrete pad and a couple of sea cans that is getting paid \$20 million per year to operate. Whenever questions are asked, there is nothing but stonewalling from the government.

In the last couple of weeks alone, there is half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money with a lot of questions swirling around. Who got the money? Who made the decisions for these wasteful boondoggles? What are we going to do, in some cases, if we can get taxpayers' money back? How can we ensure that this does not continue to happen in our country?

- (1950)

That is why the Liberals do not deserve the majority on committees. It is why they deserve the utmost scrutiny. That is why Conservatives are going to keep fighting day in and day out to get the accountability that Canadians deserve and to ensure good use of taxpayers' money. It is going to take all the resources we can get in the House of Commons.

That is why I do not support the efforts to change the Standing Orders the way the Liberals are doing it. The Liberals deserve more accountability, more transparency and more scrutiny, not less, when they try to take a majority in the committees.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Stephen Harper had a minority government, and then he had a majority of the seats in the House. When he got the majority of the seats in the House, he was given a majority of seats in the standing committees. In a minority situation, it is a minority number of seats in the standing committees. When a government makes up a majority on the floor of the House of Commons, it gets a majority in the standing committees. That is a long-established principle and parliamentary tradition, not only here in Canada but in the entire Commonwealth. Now the Conservatives want to change the rules.

I pose this question to the member. Let us say a government wins 172 seats on an election night, and then one member crosses the floor, so it has 171 seats. Is the member trying to tell me the Conservatives would say the government still gets to have a majority of the committee members? I think the Conservatives would do the exact same thing. Stephen Harper would do exactly what he did when he got a majority government, when he had a majority of the members in the House of Commons, and that is to have a majority in the standing committees.

Does the member not see the hypocrisy?

- (1955)

Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, do members know how Stephen Harper got a majority government? He got it from Canadians. He got directly elected by Canadians with a majority government. He

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did not have a minority government and then have floor crossers give him an artificial majority through backroom deals.

We have talked about distrust, we have talked about hypocrisy, and we have talked about Canadians being frustrated with our democratic institutions. Actions like this give the institution and the Liberals a bad name. Stephen Harper earned his majority through the ballot box, from Canadians. The Prime Minister did not get a majority mandate from Canadians. He got it through backroom deals with floor crossers, and that is why Canadians are frustrated.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was interested by what my Conservative colleague just said about Stephen Harper's majority, which was won through votes. The last time the Liberals won a majority through votes was in 2015, with Justin Trudeau's promise of sunny ways, and we know where that got them. This was followed by minority governments because Canadians were dissatisfied with this Liberal government's performance. We saw what happened again in the last election, in 2025.

I guess what I am saying is not interesting to the members who are speaking right now.

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is not even quorum in the House, and yet we cannot hear ourselves speak because the Liberals are laughing amongst themselves about this new supermajority. I would ask for a quorum call.

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask the clerk to count the members present.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: We have quorum.

I would invite the member for Drummond to finish his comments or question.

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, for those who just arrived, I was saying that there are a few rules here, including showing respect for those who are talking. They may not be used to having such large numbers in the House. They will get used to it eventually—

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

I think that the member is well aware that he cannot mention who is or is not in the House of Commons. That is something we all know, so he should stop playing these political games.

The Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. member continues, I would mention that the Standing Orders do not allow us to refer to a specific member's presence or absence. A group of members or a type of member may be mentioned. I listened with interest to what the member for Drummond was saying and he did not break this rule. I therefore invite him to continue his comments or question and finish his remarks.

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Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, this end to the day's debate is surreal. We have definitely seen just about everything today.

There are just a few seconds left and I want to let my Conservative colleague answer the question. My colleague saw the debate. I would like to hear his thoughts on the Liberals' demonstration of what they intend to do with their newly acquired majority.

How does my colleague see the coming months and years unfolding? What is his view of the state of democracy and the Liberals' respect for it?

[*English*]

Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would agree. Liberal arrogance is on full display.

I can put a marker down now that over the course of the coming weeks, months and years, however long this Parliament goes on, if these changes go into effect, we are going to see a number of filibusters and a number of attempts at committee to shut down investigations, shut down witnesses and shut down other things. We have seen it, for example, with the \$300-million PrescribeIT program. The Liberals at the health committee, for weeks, have been filibustering all of that.

We are going to look forward, and I am going to pin-mark this conversation, this thought, here tonight: the number of times we are going to see filibusters in an attempt to shut down debate or to vote down debate and vote down investigations into their corruption and wrongdoing.

• (2000)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 9 now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

The Deputy Speaker: 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.

Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I ask that we have a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2045)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 105*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Anderson
Arnold

Aitchison
Allison
Anstey
Au

Baber
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaufieu

Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joneas
Bonin
Borrelli
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Chambers
Chong

Cody
Dalton
Davidson

Davies (Niagara South)
DeBellefeuille
DeRidder
Diotte
Dowdall
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Gallant
Gaudreau
Généreux

Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)

Godin
Gourde
Guglielmin
Hallan

Ho
Jackson
Jivani

Kelly
Kibble
Kmiec

Kram
Kronis
Kusie

Lake
Larouche
Lawton

Lemire
Lewis (Essex)

Lloyd
Mahal
Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)

Martel
Mazier

McKenzie
McPherson
Menegakis

Morin
Motz
Nater

Patzer
Perron
Poilievre

Reid
Reynolds
Roberts

Ross
Ruff
Scheer

Seeback
Simard
Steinley

Bailey
Barlow

Barsalou-Duval
Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)

Bexte
Blanchet
Block

Bonk
Boulerice
Brassard

Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Champoux

Cobena
Cooper
Dancho

Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dawson
Deltell

Deschênes
Doherty
Duncan

Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Fortin
Garon

Gazan
Genuis
Gill (Brampton West)

Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)

Goodridge
Groleau
Gunn

Hardy
Holman
Jansen

Johns
Khanna
Kirkland

Konanz
Kramp-Neuman
Kuruc

Kwan
Lantsman
Lawrence

Lefebvre
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)

Lobb
Majumdar
Mantle

May
McCauley
McLean (Calgary Centre)

Melillo
Moore
Morrison

Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus

Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner

Richards
Rood
Rowe

Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shiplely

Small
Ste-Marie

Stevenson
Strauss
Thériault
Tochor
Uppal
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Williamson

Strahl
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
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Waugh
Zimmer— 168

NAYS

Members

Acan
Ali
Anand
Auguste
Baker
Battiste
Begum

Bendayan
Blois
Carney
Casey
Champagne
Chartrand
Chen
Chi
Clark
Cormier
Dabrusin
Danko
Deschênes-Thériault
Dhaliwal
Diab
Duguid
Earle
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fanjoy
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fuhr
Gainey
Gerretsen
Gould
Greaves
Guilbeault
Hajdu
Harrison
Hirtle
Hogan
Hussen
Idlout
Jeneroux
Joseph
Kelloway
Klassen
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lauzon
Lavoie
Leitão
Long
Ma
MacDonald (Cardigan)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)
Martin
McKelvie
McKnight

Al Soud
Alty
Anandasangaree
Bains
Bardeesy
Beech
Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill Riv-
er)
Bittle
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Chang
Chatel
Chenette
Church
Connors
Coteau
Dandurand
d'Entremont
Desrochers
Dhillon
Duclos
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fancy
Fergus
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gaheer
Gasparro
Gladu
Grant
Guay
Gull-Masty
Hanley
Hepfner
Hodgson
Housefather
Iacono
Jaczek
Joly
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lambropoulos
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)
Lattanzio
Lavack
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)

Ménard
Michel
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Nguyen
Ntumba
Olszewski
Osborne
Powlowski
Ramsay
Robertson
Romanado
Sahota
Sari
Schiefke
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Solomon
St-Pierre
Tesser Derksen
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Villeneuve
Weiler
Yip
Zerucelli

Government Orders

Mendès
Miedema
Mingarelli
Myles
Nathan
Noormohamed
Oliphant
O'Rourke
Petipas Taylor
Provost
Rana
Rochefort
Royer
Saini
Sawatzky
Sgro
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sodhi
Sousa
Sudds
Thompson
Valdez
Vandenbeld
Watchorn
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 172

PAIRED

Members

Hoback

Sarai— 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

The next question is on the main motion.

[*English*]

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

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

● (2100)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 106*)

YEAS

Members

Acan
Ali
Anand
Auguste
Baker
Battiste
Begum

Bendayan
Blois
Brière
Carr
Chagger

Al Soud
Alty
Anandasangaree
Bains
Bardeesy
Beech
Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill Riv-
er)
Bittle
Boulerice
Carney
Casey
Champagne

Government Orders

Chang	Chartrand	Villeneuve	Watchorn
Chatel	Chen	Weiler	Wilkinson
Chenette	Chi	Yip	Zahid
Church	Clark	Zerucelli	Zuberi — 178
Connors	Cormier		
Coteau	Dabrusin		NAYS
Dandurand	Danko		Members
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	d'Entremont	Aboutaif	Aitchison
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers	Albas	Allison
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Anderson	Anstey
Diab	Duclos	Arnold	Au
Duguid	Dzerowicz	Baber	Bailey
Earle	Ehsassi	Baldinelli	Barlow
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith	Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Eyolfson	Fancy	Beaulieu	Bélangier (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Fanjoy	Fergus		Bexte
Fisher	Fonseca	Berthold	Blanchet
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Bezan	Block
Fraser	Fry	Blanchette-Joncas	Bonk
Fuhr	Gaheer	Bonin	Bragdon
Gainey	Gasparro	Borrelli	Brock
Gazan	Gerretsen	Brassard	Calkins
Gladu	Gould	Brunelle-Duceppe	Chambers
Grant	Greaves	Caputo	Chong
Guay	Guilbeault	Champoux	Cody
Gull-Masty	Hajdu	Cobena	Dalton
Hanley	Harrison	Cooper	Davidson
Hepfner	Hirtle	Dancho	Dawson
Hodgson	Hogan	Davies (Niagara South)	Deltell
Housefather	Hussen	DeBellefeuille	Deschênes
Iacono	Idlout	DeRidder	Doherty
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Diotte	Duncan
Johns	Joly	Dowdall	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Joseph	Kayabaga	Epp	Fortin
Kelloway	Khalid	Falk (Provencher)	Garon
Klassen	Koutrakis	Gallant	Généreux
Kwan	Lalonde	Gaudreau	Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Genius	Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lapointe (Sudbury)	Gill (Brampton West)	Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Gill (Windsor West)	Godin
Lavack	Lavoie		Gourde
LeBlanc	Leitão	Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	Guglielmin
Lightbound	Long	Goodridge	Hallan
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Ma	Groleau	Ho
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacDonald (Cardigan)	Gunn	Jackson
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Hardy	Jivani
Maloney	Martin	Holman	Khanna
McGuinty	McKelvie	Jansen	Kirkland
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McKnight	Kelly	Konanz
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	McPherson	Kibble	Kramp-Neuman
Ménard	Mendès	Kmiec	Kuruc
Michel	Miedema	Kram	Lake
Miller	Mingarelli	Kronis	Larouche
Morrissey	Myles	Kusie	Lawton
Naqvi	Nathan	Lantsman	Lemire
Nguyen	Noormohamed	Lawrence	Lewis (Essex)
Ntumba	Oliphant	Lefebvre	Lloyd
Olszewski	O'Rourke	Leslie	Mahal
Osborne	Petitpas Taylor	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)
Powlowski	Provost	Lobb	Martel
Ramsay	Rana	Majumdar	Mazier
Robertson	Rochefort		McKenzie
Romanado	Royer	Mantle	Melillo
Sahota	Saini	May	Moore
Sari	Sawatzky	McCauley	Morrison
Schiefke	Sgro	McLean (Calgary Centre)	Muys
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Menegakis	Normandin
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sodhi	Morin	Paul-Hus
Solomon	Sousa	Motz	Plamondon
St-Pierre	Sudds	Nater	Redekopp
Tesser Derksen	Thompson	Patzer	
Turnbull	Valdez	Perron	
van Koeverden	Vandenbeld	Poillievre	

Government Orders

Reid
Reynolds
Roberts
Ross
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Simard
Steinley
Stevenson
Strauss
Thériault
Tochor
Uppal
Vien
Vis

Rempel Garner
Richards
Rood
Rowe
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shipley
Small
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Viersen
Wagantall

Warkentin
Williamson

Waugh
Zimmer — 162

PAIRED

Members

Hoback

Sarai — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being 9.02 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:02 p.m.)

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