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Tuesday, May 30, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 40(1) of the Privacy Act, a report from the Privacy Commissioner entitled “Protecting privacy in a pandemic”.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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CANADA-NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR ATLANTIC ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled “Improving Bus Connectivity in Canada”.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the chair of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for tabling his 13th report of the committee. While the Conservatives always enjoy working with the clerk, the chair, the analysts and our colleagues on the committee, I want to make note for this report that the Conservatives did call for the removal of the inflationary carbon tax on intercity bus travel, and unfortunately our recommendation was not accepted by the majority of the committee.

We did hear from bus operators in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and other parts of the country about the significant impact of the carbon tax in terms of the cost pressures on their operations. They are, in many cases, taking a significant business risk to offer this service to Canadians, and at great value to many Canadians, and they face these taxes and other red tape burdens. This is especially true now with carbon tax number 2 coming in.

This is driving up costs. It is driving up costs for tickets of passengers, and as a result, these bus routes, which are lifelines in many parts of Canada, are more expensive. There is no rebate for these bus companies.

I just want to make note of this on behalf of my Conservative colleagues on the transport committee on the occasion of the tabling of this report.

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, entitled “Main Estimates 2023-24”.

* * *

• (1005)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker: The following motion, in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, was put on the Order Paper:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(b), consideration by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security of all votes under Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, be extended beyond May 31, 2023.

(Motion agreed to)

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the fourth time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime.

The common people of Swan River are demanding a common-sense solution to repeal the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, which have fuelled a surge in crime throughout their community. People used to travel around the town freely and safely in Swan River, but now they fear leaving their own homes.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, as they directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to say what a privilege it is to stand in this House and bring forward petitions from Canadians. We are not required to do this, but I think it is really important that we stand and represent people from across our nation.

The individuals I am representing today are very upset that they have been demeaned in this House for the positions they take. They support something that is so crucial: violence against pregnant women.

The petitioners indicate it is well established that the risk of violence against women increases when they are pregnant. Currently, the injury or death of preborn children as victims of crime is not considered an aggravating circumstance for sentencing purposes within the Criminal Code of Canada. These individuals, who say something contrary to other individuals but come together on this issue, state that Canada has no abortion law. The legal void is so extreme that we do not even recognize preborn children when they are victims of violent crimes.

Justice requires that an attacker who abuses a pregnant woman and her preborn child be sentenced such that the sentence matches the crime. The petitioners call upon this House to legislate the abuse of pregnant women and/or the infliction of harm on a preborn child as aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes.

I have another petition to present, representing a number of Canadians on this issue. They say it is well established that the risk of violence against women increases when they are pregnant. Currently, a woman's pregnancy is not an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes in the Criminal Code of Canada.

Addressing this legal void through sentencing that considers the vulnerable state of a pregnant woman is necessary in denouncing such crimes. The majority of Canadians support access to abortion. Eighty-four per cent of Canadians support access to abortion.

Having appropriate sentences when violent crimes are committed against pregnant women is imperative to protecting a woman's reproductive choice to have a child. The unity across Canada on this issue is so exciting. The sentence should match the crime.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to legislate the abuse of a pregnant woman and/or the infliction of harm on her child as aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes in the Criminal Code.

I thank both parties for their support of Bill C-311 and for their calls to bring forward proper legislation in regard to violence against pregnant women.

FALUN GONG

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise one more time to table a petition that highlights the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

The petitioners indicate that Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. They note that practitioners are the victims of various forms of persecution in China, including forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

The petitioners are asking this House to pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs; to amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting; and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

• (1010)

OPIOIDS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to table this petition today on behalf of moms, family members and loved ones of those who have died from a toxic, poisoned drug supply. This has become one of the most deadly public health emergencies of our lifetime, with approximately 21 deaths a day and a death toll of over 35,000 people in the last six years. This toxic drug crisis rages.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency. It is timely, because one year ago this week, the House defeated a bill that called on the government to take steps to end overdose deaths and overdoses injuries.

The petitioners call on the government to immediately collaborate with the provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive, pan-Canadian overdose action plan. They want to ensure that any plan considers reforms that other countries have used, including ensuring there is a safer supply of substances, stopping the criminalization of people who use substances and changing flawed drug policy and policing. They want to ensure this emergency is taken seriously with adequately funded programming and supports that will save lives.

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today with a petition of grave concern to residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands and throughout Vancouver Island.

The petitioners draw attention to the alarmingly dwindling remaining original old-growth forests of British Columbia, of which only 2.7% remain. On Vancouver Island, only 2.6% of old-growth forests are protected. The last unprotected intact old-growth valley on southern Vancouver Island, Fairy Creek, has been subjected to logging and has been the site of many arrests for non-violent civil disobedience.

The petitioners call on the federal government to work with the provinces and first nations governments to immediately halt the logging of endangered old growth, to fund long-term protection of old-growth forests and to support value-added forestry to create more jobs in partnership with first nations. On this important point, the federal government could ban the export of raw logs to maximize the use of forests in local communities and create local jobs, and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel production, which is promoted as a false climate solution.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the incredible growth of the Indo-Canadian community over recent years has really put an emphasis on the need to look at international flights. I am tabling a petition from constituents who in essence are saying they would like to see an international flight from Winnipeg directly to India and preferably right to Amritsar. We need to see more international flights going from Canada to India.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to take that into consideration and to work with and lobby the airlines, and in particular the Winnipeg International Airport, to see what can be done. This is not only for Indo-Canadian members, as the demand to fly to India as a desired location far exceeds even the Indo-Canadian community.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1015)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

That, given that,

Business of Supply

(i) the House called on the government to launch a public inquiry into allegations of foreign interference in Canada's democratic system, on March 23 and May 8, 2023,

(ii) the government did not heed this call, and instead appointed an independent special rapporteur who has recommended against holding a public inquiry, despite noting significant gaps and leaving many questions either unasked or unanswered,

(iii) serious questions have been raised about the special rapporteur process, the counsel he retained in support of this work, his findings, and his conclusions,

(iv) only a full public inquiry can fully restore the confidence of Canadians in the integrity of our democratic institutions,

the House:

(a) call on the Right Hon. David Johnston to step aside from his role as special rapporteur, and call on the government to urgently establish a public commission of inquiry which would be,

(i) led by an individual selected with unanimous support from all recognized parties in the House,

(ii) granted the power to review all aspects of foreign interference from all states, including, but not limited to, the actions of the Chinese, Indian, Iranian and Russian governments,

(iii) asked to present its report and any recommendations in advance of the next dissolution of Parliament or, at the latest, at the fixed election date as set by the Canada Elections Act; and

(b) instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to provide a report to the House as soon as possible with a recommendation on who could lead such a commission of inquiry and what its terms of reference should include.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I must say that it is with sadness that I stand here today, when the NDP has to put forward this motion.

The situation around foreign interference is real. It is happening. It is impacting Canadian society. It is impacting us all. It is damaging to our democratic system. It is threatening to some Canadians who are very active in their fight for basic human rights and democracy.

Despite this, the Liberal government does not see the importance of why, in looking into these matters, there should have been a public inquiry right at the outset. Instead, the Prime Minister decided, himself, that the appropriate path forward would be to appoint a special rapporteur.

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Now here we are; the special rapporteur has tabled a report, and there are lots of issues with the report and with the entire process. I just want to say on the public record what the NDP is calling for. Our motion essentially calls for these four things: that the independent special rapporteur, the Right Hon. David Johnston, step aside; that the government launch an independent public inquiry on election interference by foreign governments; that the commissioner of the public inquiry be selected with unanimous agreement from the House leaders of all recognized parties; and that a report on the public inquiry be tabled in the House before the next election.

In addition, to get going with this work, the NDP's motion also calls for the House to instruct PROC to report to the House on the terms of reference and a possible commissioner who could lead such a public inquiry. This would allow for the greater pressure that needs to be put on the government in the coming weeks in terms of the need for an inquiry; it would also set the stage to show that this work can and must be done.

Last Friday, I had a classified briefing with CSIS. I was briefed on foreign interference and how I was subjected to it by the Chinese Communist Party. The briefing was very clear in saying that I could not disclose exactly how I was subjected to foreign interference, because that would put in jeopardy the important work the intelligence agency is doing. That is something I obviously would not want to jeopardize. To that end, I am not able or at liberty to share exactly what is happening or how it is happening with regard to my being targeted. However, CSIS made it clear that I am subject to foreign interference and will continue to be a target.

Foreign interference is happening. Whether someone is in support of the Chinese Communist Party, ambivalent about it or opposed to its policies, they could be targeted and subject to foreign interference. We also know that this could happen prior to or during an election, as well as at any period outside of that. We are seeing that unfold.

● (1020)

Some of us are outspoken and have concerns about basic human rights and the genocide of the Uyghurs. Some of us voted in support of the motion in this House in that regard and have concerns about the erosion of the basic law in Hong Kong and the imposition of the national security law, for example. Such people need to be ever vigilant in terms of attempts of foreign-interference actors working to coerce, to co-opt, to reorient, to neutralize or even to try to silence our voices.

Coming out of this briefing, what is clear to me is that the fight for people whose human rights are being violated, who are being silenced and even threatened, is more important than ever. We must do everything we can to protect Canadians' charter rights and our fundamental right of freedom, with the freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom for peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of thought and freedom of beliefs. The very essence of what makes us whole as people is to enjoy those freedoms and to protect them for Canadians, and not only for Canadians, but also for people around the globe. This is why we are here. This is the important work that is before us. I am here to say that, despite threats of foreign interference, I will not be deterred from

fighting for those rights and fighting for the people who do not enjoy those rights.

It is more important than ever that Canada and the Canadian government do everything we can to protect our democracy and our cherished fundamental freedoms for all Canadians and people around the globe. I want to send a clear message to everyday Canadians who have families and loved ones in Hong Kong and in China; it is that I know their fear is real and the dangers their families face are real. For that reason, I am saying very clearly that I commit myself to stand with them, to fight with them and to demand action from the government to protect them.

Canadians deserve answers. They deserve accountability and, yes, they deserve protection. This is not just for members of Parliament, like me, who have privilege in this place, but for everyday Canadians as well. They too are faced with foreign interference. The work that has been done so far is inadequate. Right at the outset, the Prime Minister made a misstep. However, it is not too late; he could make a correction and do what is right to rebuild the confidence of Canadians around this process.

I read Mr. Johnston's report, cover to cover, several times. I did not want to misunderstand or miss the point that had been made. He made a number of recommendations. One of the key recommendations was that he would not recommend a public inquiry. He stated that this would have been the easy thing for him to do. With all due respect, I disagree. I actually think that for Mr. Johnston to say that there needs to be a public inquiry and that there should be one would have been the hard thing for him to do.

● (1025)

I say that because he would be saying to the Prime Minister point-blank that the process the Prime Minister had chosen was categorically wrong. He would be saying that it was the wrong process and that the Prime Minister should not have embarked on it. Moreover, it would indicate that Mr. Johnston himself should perhaps not have accepted that appointment. I understand that it would be a hard thing to do to call out the Prime Minister. We do it every day in this House because it is our job; however, I guess that when one is appointed by the Prime Minister to do a job, it is a much harder path to take, to say that it is the wrong path to take. Mr. Johnston chose the easier way and did not call out the Prime Minister; instead, he said he would carry on the work, even though he should have known that he does not enjoy the confidence of all members of this House. If he did not know, he definitely should know that by now.

In his report, Mr. Johnston notes how important it is to undertake this work so that it is entirely non-partisan, and he says that we need the co-operation of all members of the House. I absolutely agree with that. In my previous speech, I pleaded with members of the House to set aside partisan politics and to engage on the issue. Recognizing the importance of that, Mr. Johnston noted it in his report; however, we are in a situation where, for a variety of reasons, Mr. Johnston does not enjoy the full confidence of every member of this House. The latest of these is the discovery that his legal adviser donated to the Liberal Party.

That surely should have been flagged, as Mr. Johnston was putting together his team, but it was not flagged. The team went on to carry on with this work. The legal adviser was a key member of the team in reviewing the documents from CSIS. How can it be that this went unnoticed? How is it even possible that, now that it is on the public record, there is no further action to be taken after the fact?

The basic principle of the appearance of conflict alone would suffice for someone to say, "I made an error and, therefore, I will now step away." That did not happen, so now we are in this House and the NDP's motion is calling for Mr. Johnston to step down.

We have to do this work right. It is too important for us not to embark on a proper process, one that every Canadian has confidence in and one that is devoid of partisan politics. Mr. Johnston knows that much of the information he and his team have reviewed from CSIS could not be disclosed because it would put national security in jeopardy. I understand that. I do. I had my briefing. I was also told that there is much information I cannot share. I absolutely understand not wanting to jeopardize national security, but precisely because of that, the person who is looking at these documents needs to be a person whom everyone has their trust in. I am sorry to say that Mr. Johnston does not enjoy that confidence.

That is a reality. No amount of talking will change that. No amount saying that we are going to look forward instead of backward, that we are going to just plough forward and push through, is going to change that. That is now a reality, and the truth is that we must change the situation so that those facts are no longer relevant in moving forward. That is why we must have a public inquiry.

● (1030)

I am going to take a moment to turn to another aspect of the work that Mr. Johnston has provided, and what he stated in his report, which is on the question of who is reviewing the documents from the PMO. It was astounding to me. He noted the communication breakdown and the flaws within the system, and it kind of took my breath away to realize what a fiasco that whole process was, to be sure.

I will touch on this. Mr. Johnston states, "I have found that the narrative that the government failed to act is not a fair conclusion based on the facts." However, in his report, he does not explain why that is a fair conclusion. He is simply saying to trust him that it is a fair conclusion. In the report, Mr. Johnston cited the communication challenges, and we have to ask this question: Who set up those poor channels of communications? It was the government itself. In the report, Mr. Johnston cites, "If staffers are away, they may not see the binder that day." He is referring to the binder from

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CSIS, the intelligence binder. He is saying that the people reviewing this critical, serious information are staffers. Mr. Johnston does not define exactly what a staffer is, but in this universe, when we talk about "staffers", they are political appointees. Ministers appoint ministerial staff as staffers. The PMO appoints staffers, who are political appointees the PM appoints in his office. That is how we generally understand the term "staffer".

However, we have to ask why on earth a staffer would be reviewing top secret documents from CSIS. In what universe is that normal? That is not normal. That is not okay. That does not take seriously the work of the intelligence agency. I would argue that it is more than that the government, somehow, is botching the whole communications process. Right from the outset, in undertaking this work, there was no seriousness to this work. When one puts a staffer at the table like this, the staffer's goal is to look for political damage; that is why they are there, but that should not be how serious documents from CSIS on intelligence are taken. They should not be looked at from the point of view of how to address political damage. However, it seems to me that this is the approach, and I have serious problems with that.

The report talks about the infamous leaked memo, which was reported by Global News on February 8. The report highlights it by saying, "National Security Officials Warned [the] Prime Minister...and his Office More Than a Year Before the 2019 Federal Election That Chinese Agents Were 'assisting Canadian candidates running for political offices'". This is what was reported by Global News; it is cited as a heading in the report. The report goes on to indicate that "[a]n early draft of the memorandum contained similar but not identical language to that quotation. That draft was significantly revised before the memorandum went to the Prime Minister." I have to ask whether the rapporteur asked these key questions: Who saw the draft memo? Who was the draft memo prepared for? Who changed it, and why? We do not have any answers to that. The report is completely silent on that. However, I think that it is pertinent information.

● (1035)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is not the first time that the NDP has disagreed with the process that David Johnston has been in, but it certainly is the first time that it has participated in the Conservatives' conspiracy theories and antics to malign his character.

In 2018, we were studying the debates commission, and David Johnston, who was leading that process, appeared before committee. I would like to read a quote of what was said about David Johnston:

You are the gold standard of public service and I can't imagine any position for which you wouldn't be eminently qualified to represent Canadians and bring that fairness and values, and your integrity and your intelligence, your experience, to bear....

I have the highest regard for you, as does my caucus, and if at the end of the day, you end up being the debates commissioner, we as a country would be well served.

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That was said by David Christopherson, a former NDP MP from Hamilton Centre.

How is it that the NDP cannot set aside its partisan interests this time?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, what nonsense that is. It is not partisan politics; this is the report that was tabled by Mr. Johnston, and I am raising issues with the report.

I will just go on and raise another issue with the report on the issue around the nomination of the member for Don Valley North. Mr. Johnston notes that irregularities were observed in the member for Don Valley North's nomination in the 2019 election, and that there is well-grounded suspicion that the irregularities were tied to the PRC consulate in Toronto, with which the member maintains relationships. Mr. Johnston noted that there were irregularities and that there were well-grounded suspicions. The Prime Minister was briefed on this, and then the Prime Minister concluded that there should be no action taken. Mr. Johnston noted that this was reasonable. How on earth is that reasonable when there are irregularities—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I have to go to another question.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, my thanks to the NDP for finally standing up like an opposition party and acting like an opposition party in the House. Bravo.

I know it has been our party that has stood against the idea of a special rapporteur all along. It has been the Conservative Party that has really been the only party that has tried to bring the government down because of its corruption and many other issues. What I want to ask directly to the NDP is this: How far does this new opposition go? Will it stand with Conservatives and bring this corrupt Liberal government down?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1040)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that, if they want to participate in the debate, they need to wait until it is the appropriate time to do it. It is not when someone else is speaking.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I know that the Conservatives are blinded by partisanship, but the key issue here is that they seem to continually forget that it was the NDP, by the way, that first moved the motion to call for a public inquiry at committee and in the House. Here we are again, calling for Mr. Johnston to step down, for a public inquiry and for PROC to undertake this work. We are taking the issue seriously, not being blinded by partisanship, on the importance of why this needs to be done. People should not look only at me, as a person who has been impacted by foreign interference, and at other members of the House, but also at the Canadian public, how it is being impacted, why this work is so important and why this motion is before us.

I call on the Conservatives to support this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the NDP on the strong stance it has taken today. As my colleague said, the NDP did indeed move a motion calling for an independent public inquiry, but the Bloc started asking questions about this issue three weeks ago. Still, I am happy to see that the New Democrats are on board with the opposition consensus in favour of launching this independent public inquiry at last.

What is happening right now is extremely serious. It undermines public confidence in democracy, and that has major consequences. I really feel for my colleague, who was herself a target of Chinese interference. Of course the Bloc will support this motion.

I do have one question though. Given the significance of the situation, which is literally scandalous, will the NDP bite its tongue yet again to keep the Liberal government in power, even as it grows less and less deserving of Quebecers' and Canadians' confidence? Will the NDP help ensure that the government faces a vote of confidence so the House can decide on its future? I think this is really important and really serious, and I would like to know my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I want to say very clearly that at no point did New Democrats bite their tongues with regard to this issue. The NDP, every single step of the way, demanded accountability and called on the government to do what is right. That is exactly what we have done. No one should take my word for it; everyone can check Hansard and PROC and see what the NDP did. The member representing us, the NDP House leader at that time, moved the motion to call for a public inquiry. Who was filibustering and not doing the important work? Oh, that would be the Conservatives. It was New Democrats who took this seriously right from the get-go and continued to demand accountability, and we will continue to do that work. We will not be silenced. I will not be silenced by foreign interference, nor will I be silenced by the government.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver East for the passion, intelligence and wisdom that she brings to the House with this motion. The member has spoken very eloquently about the impact of foreign interference on Canadians of Chinese, Iranian and Indian origin. The impacts of this foreign interference have ramifications right across the country. The question I want to ask is, quite simply, this: If the Liberal government continues to refuse to hold a public inquiry, though I think that resistance is starting to diminish, what message does that send to Canadians of diverse origins who are concerned about the impacts of foreign governments trying to impact our democratic system?

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Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I should note also that I have been sanctioned by Russia. I am on its sanctions list, so this is the second round in which I am experiencing this.

On the question, if the Prime Minister does not announce that he will proceed with a public inquiry, then he is sending a clear message that he is not taking this issue seriously. He is sending a clear message that he does not care whether or not confidence of the Canadian public is being eroded around what the government is doing to ensure foreign interference is addressed properly in the House.

The most concerning thing is this: Everyday Canadians who are being impacted by this, who are afraid to attend rallies and who are afraid to speak up, and there are people faced with that reality today, will have nowhere to go. That cannot be acceptable. I hope the Prime Minister understands this, ensures that confidence is rebuilt and says that our democracy is too important to let his own personal reasons allow him to not proceed with this work.

• (1045)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, David Christopherson talked about David Johnston as an individual who had incredible credentials. Taking the issue seriously, the Prime Minister appointed David Johnston as the special rapporteur and agreed that, if the report said there should be a public inquiry, the Prime Minister would call a public inquiry. David Johnston got the security clearances, looked at all the facts and made some conclusions. This did not meet what the opposition party wanted to be able to see.

Does the NDP still have personal confidence in David Johnston?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the last I checked, David Christopherson is not the person doing this work in the House. I will say that on the record.

The other thing is that I wonder if government members have read the report. The issue here is not about personality. The issue here is the work that has been done, and the report indicates a number of areas in which there are problems and concerns with the conclusion. I have not even had a chance to go through all the areas I have concerns with. I have highlighted a couple.

The reality remains that Mr. David Johnston does not enjoy the confidence of every member of the House, and to do this work—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise today on this important topic. I found the debate earlier quite interesting. We saw the Conservatives and the NDP fight about who did what first and who is criticizing the government more.

Meanwhile, on this side of the House, we are actually getting to work to make sure that our democratic institutions are protected. While we do that, the opposition parties can stand up to fight about

who did what best, whose clip came first and whose motion did what.

I think Canadians expect a government that puts partisanship aside to focus on the real issues that our country is facing. The threat of foreign interference is not a partisan issue. Every single Canadian, regardless of who they vote for or what party they support, should absolutely care about this issue. That should be reflected in the House.

The issue of foreign interference in our democratic institutions is not a new one. In fact, it is not even a unique one for Canada. We have seen instances around the world, such as the 2016 U.S. presidential election. We have seen efforts of foreign interference in France, Australia and New Zealand. All of these countries have been dealing with this issue.

In fact, Canada was warned by CSIS in 2013 about the threat of foreign interference. The then democratic institutions minister, now the opposition leader, did absolutely nothing about it. The leader of the official opposition said in this place that he did not do anything about it because it did not serve his partisan interests at the time. That should indicate to Canadians the absolute basics of where the opposition parties are coming from on this issue.

We now have the report by the right hon. David Johnston, and before members have even had a chance to dive into that report, the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the Bloc have said no. They are going to close their eyes to facts. They do not want to receive the secure national security briefing because they want to be able to continue to still make ignorant claims. They would like to remain blind to the facts. It should not surprise anyone that a party based on conspiracy theories and clickbait would not be a mature and responsible opposition party.

Yesterday, in this very place, the Leader of the Opposition said that he did not want a national security briefing because he did not want to be silenced. That should tell Canadians the level of maturity of the Leader of the Opposition. He is not ready to lead this country. He is barely ready to lead an official opposition of this place.

For somebody to suggest that having a national security briefing silences one on this issue is not only beyond false, but also beyond comprehension. It shows how little he knows about national security matters.

I myself have national security clearance because I was a member of the NSICOP committee, yet I have debated on this issue several times. I am leading the opposition day speech in this place. I have spoken out at PROC. I have asked witnesses serious questions. In fact, in my role in the national defence committee, I brought forward a motion that we study cybersecurity. This was all while having national security briefings, sitting on NSICOP and studying foreign interference, yet I have been able to serve my constituents by raising the issues that matter.

Business of Supply

By taking national security seriously and by understanding that one can advocate for stronger democratic institutions, one can still advocate for stronger legislation and mechanisms while also protecting the national security information of this country.

● (1050)

That is what responsible members do. If I can do it, as a member of this government, certainly the Leader of the Opposition should be mature enough to understand the importance of national security while still being able to advocate for stronger mechanisms and measures. The fact that he cannot comprehend how to put the national security of this country first, instead of his partisan attacks, should tell Canadians everything they need to know about the seriousness, or lack thereof, of the Leader of the Opposition and, for that matter, the leader of the Bloc.

When it comes to the issues, I have heard many times in this debate that confidence in Canadians is being eroded. Is that not ironic given the members saying it are the ones who are closing their eyes to the facts? In the right hon. David Johnston's report, he specifically talks about the balance between wanting to make a report that everyday Canadians can read and access with better understand, while at the same time protecting the national security information we all rely on to keep this country safe. He acknowledges that.

David Johnston said that he created an annex to this report with all of the information he based his decisions on. He included this annex for leaders of all recognized parties, members of NSICOP and those with national security clearance that need to have access to it. He specifically said in this report for leaders of the opposition and members of NSICOP to please read this annex, the information that he based his decisions on. He said that they can read it and come forward if they believe that, based on the information, his recommendations were ill-informed or they have taken a different approach.

It is pretty open and transparent to say there is a balance between Canadians needing to understand the positions and the recent media leaks while protecting national security. He then went on to say to everybody who has that national security clearance, such as opposition parties and NSICOP, that all of the information, which he based his recommendations and findings on, is in one easy document, and that, if they disagree with those findings, then they can come forward and say so. However, this will be done while protecting the confidential information collected by the national security community. That is quite reasonable.

In fact, it was an incredibly readable report. I have read many reports of this nature. NSICOP has produced many reports of this nature, and one of the things NSICOP always tries to do in the public version of its reports is to take care and concern in making them as digestible as possible, so any Canadian picking up a report would understand the national security dynamics happening at any given time.

David Johnston suggested to read the information to determine on one's own if one thinks his findings were reasonable, so what happens? The Leader of the Opposition covers his eyes and his ears and says, "No, no, no. I don't want facts and information. I want to be able to stand up here and make fake innuendos, fake accusations and raise some money for my election campaign." He wants to

make personal attacks against the Prime Minister and the right hon. David Johnston.

What does the Bloc do? As my hon. colleague says, it is "blue light", and it just follows suit. Then the NDP, with this motion, calls for the removal of the special rapporteur based on his report. Its leader has at least agreed to read the annex and get that national security briefing. However, before that has been done, to my knowledge, or at least before the leader of the NDP has made any assessment on the information the right hon. David Johnston used to come to the conclusions he did, and before NDP members have had a chance to really look at it to see if all the information is relevant, they say that they do not support the report. They do so without reading the basis of the recommendations.

● (1055)

When it comes to national security, there is a lot more context and information required than just a few media leaks. Therefore, for any responsible government to refuse to read the national security documentation in the briefings, to refuse to wait and, even for those who have agreed to read it but refuse to actually digest it, look at it or consider it and just throw the report out, is nothing more than partisan games with Canadians' national security and with our democratic institutions. Therefore, if anybody is suggesting that confidence is being eroded, I would suggest it is by the irresponsible behaviour of our opposition parties in not actually doing the work, considering the information and making informed decisions, which is something that, regardless of party, I think every Canadian would expect their MP to be able to do.

I have talked about why I find the opposition parties irresponsible and, in particular, why I find the Leader of the Opposition not only irresponsible but also incredibly immature and unfit to lead, even a party, in this place. However, I want to also talk about some of the things we have done since 2015 because, as I started with in my speech, this is not new.

Business of Supply

The opposition party, as the previous Conservative government, knew about foreign interference in 2013. Let me just say, too, that this is this not new, and it is never going to be over. There is no silver bullet any government could implement to say that foreign interference is no longer an issue. A serious democracy is going to always have to be diligent to the foreign forces that would love to destabilize the democracy that Canadians have fought so hard for. Therefore, the important piece of dealing with our democratic institutions is to put the partisanship aside and continually work on how to adapt and change with the changing nature of the threat. However, again, we cannot even have those types of debates in this place because we are too busy hearing partisan and personal attacks from the opposition members, who should be bringing forward recommendations and suggestions to move forward on legislation or mechanisms that would strengthen democratic institutions. Because we cannot get past personal attacks, the government is going to keep working based on experts and those who have come forward making recommendations, and based on looking at other countries and some of the work that they have done.

Some of the things that we have done since 2015 include creating NSICOP, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which gives national security clearance to representatives from recognized parties in the House, as well as national security briefings and documents. It is a committee that I mentioned I sat on, and it was an extremely professional and serious committee that has not only produced excellent reports for Canada but also has been recognized globally for the work it has done.

We created NSIRA, which is a review of our national security community. We have also established the critical election incident public protocol, and we have created the security and intelligence threats to elections task force, often referred to as SITE.

We have established rapid response mechanisms during elections. We have also had Bill C-59 and Bill C-76, and we have created the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. That is all since 2015.

While opposition parties say that we do not take this seriously, we have right here eight examples that I have listed. I would be curious as to whether, at any point during the day, the Conservative Party will be able to name even one example of something that it did in 10 years to deal with the threats to national security and to strengthen our democratic institutions. I will wait patiently through the debate today to see if that happens.

• (1100)

In addition to that, I would be very curious to see whether the members opposite come forward with serious policy and a serious policy debate.

We have the Johnston report, which makes very clear recommendations, as well as criticisms, with respect to how information is being reported to those who need it. Every government needs to seriously look at and constantly review these matters. I think there has been a strong indication that we are not only taking it seriously, but that we will implement changes to make sure that, moving forward, we are constantly improving our democratic institutions and our processes, and that we are making sure that democracy is protected for Canadians. We do not own these spaces, as this is the House of

Commons of Canadians, and it is our job collectively to ensure that we continue to maintain the democratic institutions in this place.

I have spoken at length about the seriousness of these issues, the fact that they are not new, and that in 2013 we had a government that did not take them seriously at all. We are now implementing several of the recommendations, as well as implementing mechanisms to constantly strengthen our democratic institutions.

I want to speak again to this, because we are going to hear personal attacks all day today on the Right Honourable David Johnston. We have already seen him referred to as a ski buddy, a neighbour, a friend, and I think it is quite interesting that Conservatives would refer to him in that way.

I would like to read a quote with respect to Mr. Johnston, which states:

Mr. Johnston has a strong record of public service, a broad base of support and an impressive list of achievements....He has extensive legal expertise, a comprehensive understanding of government and a deep appreciation of the duties and tasks now before him.

That was not the current Prime Minister, but the previous prime minister, Prime Minister Harper, who said that about David Johnston. Therefore, it is disappointing that the Conservatives use personal attacks to undermine not only his credibility, but his lifelong achievements, dedication to this country and public service. To erode all of that by saying he is just a ski buddy and that is how he was selected is an absolute insult to this place and to the people who serve their country. It is all being done for nothing more than partisan gain. He was good enough for Conservatives to make him the governor general. He was good enough for the former prime minister to speak of him in that way. His reputation and credibility have only come into question now that Conservatives are not getting their political way.

I have spoken a lot about the lack of maturity shown by the Leader of the Opposition. I know my time is wrapping up and I want to conclude by saying this. Canadians deserve opposition parties and parliamentarians who work hard for their constituents. We are not always going to agree, but at the very least this should be a place of adamant debate on policy. When the Conservative members opposite do not like the findings or the opinions of someone they have acknowledged and revered for years and decide to throw him away like he is no longer good enough for this country, it is an absolute shame. It shows how immature and ill-equipped the Leader of the Opposition is and that he should not be taken seriously in this country. He is clearly not ready now, nor probably ever, to lead this country, because he does not take national security seriously, but we will on behalf of Canadians.

• (1105)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the member in her characterization of the Leader of the Opposition.

Business of Supply

For the Leader of the Opposition to not seek the information is something that I find unbelievable. Each member of this House has the responsibility to get to the details and find out that information. As the member has said, she has been briefed on security information. She is capable of giving a speech in this House of Commons. I agree with some of it and I disagree with other aspects of it, but she is able to do that. She is not muzzled by the fact of having that security information.

What she did just this moment was actually support the NDP motion. She talks about the fact that contradicts Mr. Johnston's primary focus in not having a public inquiry, that factual questions around this sensitive information cannot be discussed in a public inquiry. The other aspect, he says, is that there would be a clear overlap of a public inquiry with the work he has already started doing.

He would heed, I believe, a vote of this House expressing that he must step aside. Would the government heed that vote as well?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the fact that we can disagree on some elements of policy or best ways forward but actually have that debate. It makes democracy stronger, and I think it is what Canadians expect of us.

However, when it comes to Mr. Johnston's report, the point was made that some of this information would be classified and not able to be shared publicly. Also, he has an additional mandate to move forward and to continue this work. Mr. Johnston felt that it would be repetitive.

The fact that there need to be continual conversations and that Canadians need to trust these institutions is something we could all agree with.

• (1110)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Pickering—Uxbridge indicated that eight bodies have been created since 2015 to deal with issues of national security and foreign interference.

I am just wondering if she could explain to this House where the gap was within the Liberal Party that prevented the government from informing the member for Wellington—Halton Hills of the circumstances his family was facing.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I did explain eight examples of some of the ways we are taking national security seriously.

I find it interesting to hear a question like that coming from a member whose own leader refuses to have national security briefings. The member wants to know about the national security information of one of their members, all while their leader refuses to have national security briefings on this very matter.

Forgive me, but it is hard to take the Conservatives seriously when they ask questions with such hypocrisy built right in.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member's speech covered so many things that I have questions

about. I would begin by saying that the Johnston report is a victory for China and a defeat for democracy.

The member spoke a lot about protecting democracy and about partisanship. I have a question for her. The government was elected by about 30% of the population. Therefore, 70% of the population is represented by the opposition parties, which, about two weeks ago, voted in favour of a motion calling for a public inquiry.

I would like to ask her to define the word "democracy" for me.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting, because there was actually a vote at the PROC committee about a public inquiry, and the Bloc voted against it. The Bloc members continued to not be consistent in their position, and yet they want to stand here and say that they speak for Canadians with a united voice. They do not even speak with a united position in this place, but that is okay.

The mere suggestion that the report by the Right Honourable David Johnston is a victory for China just goes to show how out of touch and irresponsible the Bloc is. I almost said Conservatives, because essentially there is no difference anymore. It just goes to show that they are more interested in headlines and clips than actually protecting democracy for Quebecers and all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, given all that we know about MPs being targeted, about Canadians being harassed and intimidated, and about police stations operating in our country, can my hon. colleague explain why the government continues to refuse to hold a public, independent inquiry? What does the government have to hide?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, our government has been open and transparent. We have been focused on the seriousness of foreign interference. I take great offence to the member raising this issue while he, himself, has raised questions and issues of foreign interference merely to try and rewrite an unfavourable past. I find that incredibly irresponsible when it comes to national security.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found it very interesting when the member told us that she was on NSICOP, she had national security clearance, yet she is still able to participate in this debate despite the fact that the Leader of the Opposition suggests that he cannot.

I did a little research. It turns out the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is also on NSICOP, which means that he would have the security clearance, yet he participated in the motion of privilege regarding the member for Milton and he also participated in a Conservative opposition motion on March 20 about foreign interference.

How is it that the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, who has the national security clearance, is not silenced, but somehow the Leader of the Opposition would be silenced if he had the exact same clearance?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent question. It goes to show that the Leader of the Opposition knows his own limitations. He is not quite capable of maintaining opposition debate, while also ensuring the responsible behaviour of keeping national security information a secret.

I think he also sends a very damaging message to his own members' constituents by suggesting that if they have national security clearance, they are now muzzled and cannot do the job their constituents sent them here to do.

Either he does not have confidence in himself to handle the important information or he does not have faith in his own Conservative members that they can also participate in meaningful debates, while respecting the national security information of this country.

It is pretty shameful, but I am not surprised by the Leader of the Opposition. He is not able to do both things at the same time.

• (1115)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, we hear the Liberals talk a lot about Mr. Johnston's respectability. Canadians respect him. I was one of those people until he accepted the appointment to be a special rapporteur when he was a member of the Trudeau Foundation, which had clearly become part of the foreign interference scandal. He was clearly in a conflict of interest.

Would the member agree that there are probably hundreds, maybe thousands, of other Canadians who are respected who could have accepted that appointment and are not in a conflict of interest?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, there was not a conflict of interest, but leave that to the Conservatives as no conspiracy theory is too grand for them to move forward with in this place.

It should also be noted that the member himself just said he supported and respected the Right Honourable David Johnston up until he took the appointment. Therefore, up until he decided to serve his country, regardless of political leadership, that is what offends the Conservative Party. Its members are offended that a former Conservative Governor General is not partisan enough and puts the service to his country first.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, they can heckle me all they want. It will not silence the fact that they are hypocrites who only turned on David Johnston because he was no longer just a Conservative, but he also wanted to serve his country regardless of political leadership.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, toward the end of that answer, there was so much heckling. I know Conservatives are trying to impress their leader as he walked into the room, but we could not quite hear the full answer because of all the heckling coming from across the way.

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did hear the full answer. There was some heckling and I do want to remind members to not heckle. I also want to remind all members to be judicious with the language they use. It is not parliamentary language sometimes.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12:00 midnight, pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made November 15, 2022, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, how did we get to this point? How is it that we are here in the House of Commons to debate a motion to hold a public inquiry on foreign interference?

It started a long time ago. About 10 years, or a decade, ago, the Prime Minister expressed his admiration for the dictatorship of China. He said that the power concentrated in Beijing allowed that dictatorship to impose its will on the people of China and that he wanted to re-create that same power here in Canada. It therefore comes as no surprise that the Chinese government wanted an ideological ally in power.

Thanks to information given to the media, we know that Beijing interfered in two elections to help get the Prime Minister elected. We know that Beijing donated \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation. A telephone call from a Chinese diplomat shows that the purpose of that donation was to buy the Prime Minister's love and loyalty.

We know that, since that time, Beijing has been interfering by threatening the family of at least one MP and targeting other MPs who criticized the policies of the dictatorship in Beijing.

We also know that foreign police stations are operating here in Canada, even after the Minister of Public Safety promised to close them. Not only are those police stations open but, worse still, the Liberal government has subsidized them with taxpayer money.

Business of Supply

We know that there are business ties between well-placed Liberals in the business world and the Liberal Party that influence this Prime Minister. All this is known, but there is a lot we do not know. People working for the intelligence service have said that Canadians need to know the truth about the relationships with the Beijing regime and its influence here in Canada. That is why there are unprecedented leaks from the intelligence service in the media. What could have compelled people to take that kind of risk? Since Canadians have learned of these risks, what has the Prime Minister done?

First, he asked Mr. Rosenberg to conduct an investigation. Mr. Rosenberg, a member of the Trudeau Foundation, said there was no problem, and that there was nothing to worry about.

There were still scandals, so the Prime Minister appointed Mr. Johnston as a special rapporteur, a fake position that does not even exist. Who is Mr. Johnston? He has been a friend of the Prime Minister's family for 40 years, a ski buddy, a cottage neighbour and another member of the Trudeau Foundation, which received the infamous \$140,000 donation.

However, the public was told not to worry because there was no conflict of interest. We know that because Mr. Johnston appointed a third person to give his opinion on the potential conflict of interest. It was another member of the Trudeau Foundation.

There are 40 million Canadians, but no one can be found outside the Trudeau Foundation to investigate this matter. That is why we need a public inquiry to make sure Canadians learn the truth.

The Prime Minister is trying to delay the launch of such an inquiry, which is inevitable. Indeed, if the Prime Minister does not launch that inquiry, I will do so when I win the next election. Today, we are studying a motion by the New Democrats, who helped the Prime Minister hide the truth and who are still in a coalition with this Prime Minister.

• (1120)

If the New Democrats are serious about forcing a public inquiry then they should tell the Prime Minister to launch a public inquiry or they will end the coalition with their Liberal bosses. That is the thing to do.

We need a foreign influence registry to ensure that anyone who is paid by a foreign government to influence and manipulate our policies will have their name published online for all the world to see.

We need stricter laws for those who facilitate setting up foreign police stations. We need to give more power to the RCMP and the police forces here in Canada to stop those who break the law by setting up police stations.

We need to wrest control of our democracy from foreign forces. We need to put Canadians back in charge of their lives. It is common sense. Let us bring common sense back by shedding light on the truth and allowing a public inquiry so that all Canadians can know the truth.

• (1125)

[English]

I will be splitting my time with the member for Brantford—Brant.

How did this all start? It started with the Prime Minister, who, before he even took office, expressed his admiration for the basic Chinese Communist dictatorship. Elsewhere, he expressed his admiration for Fidel Castro, whom he called a great revolutionary. Seeing this ideological bond, Beijing decided it had a friend and wanted to help the Prime Minister get elected. It interfered in two successive elections.

In the most recent election, intelligence confirms that Beijing wanted to see the Prime Minister win and defeat the Conservatives. It did this by intimidating people of the Chinese diaspora, who had otherwise been going out to vote patriotically. They were told they had to stay home and avoid voting. We saw that ridings with large Chinese populations had massive reductions in voter turnout.

We know that members of Parliament have been threatened by the regime in Beijing, with even the possibility of their families facing harm back home in China. We also know that the Prime Minister has been aware of many of these facts for a very long time and yet chose to do nothing. His defence is that he knew nothing. If he knew nothing and was not getting basic information from his intelligence forces, then he is incompetent and incapable of protecting our homeland.

Worst of all, the greatest victims of this are Canadians of Chinese origin, who came here to build this country, who came here to escape tyranny and embrace freedom, who follow the law and who contribute to our country every day and in every way. However, the government in this country has done nothing to protect them from the government in the country they left behind.

We have the stories, which were told to members of Parliament in our caucus. They were on doorsteps during campaigns meeting people who were in tears, people who told them that they had to leave the doorstep and go to a faraway field somewhere, leaving their phones behind because they were worried they were being tracked by a foreign government, worried that their families could be harmed, worried that acts of intimidation or even violence could happen to them here on Canadian soil. Still, the government has not set up a foreign influence registry that could help us identify the thugs who carry out this intimidation. Still, the government has refused to bring in tougher laws to shut down all foreign-controlled police stations. Still, the Prime Minister has failed to call the public inquiry that is required.

We call on the NDP to set a condition that if there is no public inquiry, the NDP will break the coalition and stand up for Canada and Canadians for once. These Canadians of Chinese origin attacked by this foreign government are patriotic Canadians. They deserve the protection of their government. These are our people. This is our land. This is our country. This is our home.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has said on a number of occasions that he does not want to receive and learn about classified information because he does not want to be silenced, yet there are members of his caucus, like the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, for example, who have the security clearances, have received briefings through NSICOP and have participated in multiple debates in this House on foreign interference.

Is it true that the Leader of the Opposition is concerned about being silenced, or is it more that he would rather be wilfully ignorant?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, it is the former.

We know that if the Prime Minister had his way, he would bring me into a room, he would drop a bunch of paper in front of me, much of which would already be public knowledge, and he would mark it “secret”. Then, if I went out in the world and spoke about a similar subject matter, he would say that I violated the rules of national security.

I know exactly what he is up to, and that is why I will continue to do my job, which as Leader of the Opposition is to hold him accountable. I will not be silenced. This is Canada, and in Canada we have freedom of expression.

• (1130)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, we just had the member for Vancouver East, who has had a confidential security briefing, speak very passionately, and she has brought forth this motion we are debating today. However, the leader of the official opposition is pretending that somehow having access to confidential material will muzzle him.

How is it that the member for Vancouver East can speak so passionately and bring forward this motion when she has had a security briefing? How could the leader of the official opposition ever pretend the contrary?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, as I said moments ago, we know what the Prime Minister's plan is. He wants to mark secret things that would otherwise be publicly debatable, put things that would be in a grey area under the secrecy of the state and then put them before me to prevent me from speaking publicly. We know that is exactly his plan.

As for NDP members, we want to know their plan. Are they going to continue to protect the Liberals? Are they going to continue to work for the Liberal Party instead of working for their own constituents? They put on a big show in here.

We have already passed a motion like this, by the way, and the government did not do anything because NDP members kept it in power. Back in committee, it was exactly the same thing. They go to press conferences and act all tough, but back in committee, all they do is give all the procedural support necessary for the Prime Minister to cover this up again and again.

They have abandoned their constituents. They do not work for the people of Canada; they work for the Prime Minister. That is why they will be out of office after the next election.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, we first called for an independent public inquiry as a result of the allegations of foreign interference in Canadian elections. By “we”, I mean the opposition parties.

According to Jean-Pierre Kingsley, former chief electoral officer of Elections Canada, a public inquiry is necessary and essential to reassure Canadians.

I would like to hear what my colleague, the leader of the official opposition, has to say about that, because, after all, Mr. Kingsley is telling us that Mr. Johnston did not even consult Elections Canada senior officials in the course of his investigation.

If foreign interference into elections was the main reason to call for a public inquiry, why did Mr. Johnston's investigation not include Elections Canada? I would like to know my colleague's thoughts on that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question.

He consulted the former leader of the Conservative Party, who learned after the meeting that the report had already been written. That is not really true consultation. It seems to me that Mr. Johnston's report was written or at least overseen by the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office. Therefore, it was not a real inquiry.

The government is saying that a public inquiry cannot be held on this matter because it would pose a threat to public safety. I would like to quote Loïc Tassé of the *Journal de Montréal*: “The Johnston report on foreign interference in Canada recommends that a public inquiry into this matter not be held. However, France has been holding a parliamentary inquiry on foreign interference for months.”

The French are capable of conducting a public inquiry. If the French can do so, and if Canadians were able to do so in the Maher Arar case, we can as well. We will do it when I am prime minister.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the member for Carleton, the leader of His Majesty's official opposition and Canada's next great prime minister, for sharing his time with me today on such a prominent issue that our country is facing. As always, it is a privilege to speak on behalf of the residents of Brantford—Brant.

Business of Supply

As we are all aware, the topic of foreign interference in this country has not only been at the forefront of discussions in this House for quite some time now, but it also remains a top concern for Canadians across this country. These foreign operatives pose major threats to the safety and security of our democratic institutions. The fact that this interference was able to grow this extensively on the Prime Minister's watch, and that it took this long for Beijing agents in this country to be expelled, speaks loudly to the current government's complete incompetence in fulfilling its basic duty to protect Canadians.

It is unacceptable that the government knew that MPs and their families had been targeted by the Communist regime in Beijing for almost three years. It is unacceptable that it took zero measures to inform those members of this House until these facts were exposed on the front pages of our press. If the government knew that the foreign operatives were using their diplomatic status to conduct foreign interference operations, it should have dealt with those individuals immediately and not years down the line when it was embarrassed because of inaction.

Regardless of our political colour, all members must work to fulfill our duties to represent our constituents and to honour the democratic process that brought us here in the first place. The fact that the Communist regime in Beijing was targeting the former leader of the Conservative Party not only shows that it was working to reelect the Prime Minister's government and defeat the Conservatives but also that the responsibilities of being a democratically elected member of Parliament have absolutely no meaning to the members on that side of the House.

Today, we are debating the opposition motion moved by the NDP. The NDP is a party of Twitter warriors who care about Canadians on social media and defend the Prime Minister and his Liberal government every step of the way.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, they can heckle me all they want.

● (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would ask members to wait until there are questions and comments. Again, it is not respectful; I do not care what party is making the comments. We see it not from everyone in the House but from all parties, and I would just ask members to be respectful when someone else has the floor.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, to really emphasize my point about how the New Democrats talk out of both sides of the mouth, let us take a look at their history.

In 2020, when Conservatives were pushing for a study on the WE Charity scandal and creating an anti-corruption committee, the NDP voted against it with the Liberals. In 2021, the New Democrats helped the Liberal government to shut down any public debates regarding Winnipeg lab documents, which were also linked, coincidentally, to the Communist regime in Beijing. In 2022, the New Democrats blindly supported the Prime Minister in

invoking the Emergencies Act. In 2023, when the Conservatives called for Katie Telford, the Prime Minister's chief of staff and most trusted political adviser, to testify on foreign election interference, the New Democrats filibustered for almost 24 hours and voted against it with the Liberals.

After the release—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is deliberately misleading the House. Pretty well everything he is saying is rubbish. If you, Madam Speaker, would ask him to stop misleading the House, I think that would be appropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I would just ask members to be careful in the words they use. However, what the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby rose on is more a point of debate, and I would just say that I would continue with the hon. member's speech. I have ruled on it.

I have another point of order. I will go to the member for Larnak—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, in his point of order, his intervention, my hon. colleague used language that is impermissible in this place. He has to withdraw it. I request that you request it of him, Madam Speaker, as would be done for any of us.

● (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I believe the word used was “deliberate”. That is the word hon. members are taking issue with. Using this word in the House is a very serious matter. It is more a question of privilege that would be used for this. If it was meant more as a point of debate, then I would say that it is not the word to be used.

I would ask the hon. member, first of all, if he would be willing to retract this word.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, certainly, I respect you, and I will withdraw it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, after the release of the so-called special rapporteur report, the Conservatives were working to get Mr. Johnston to appear before committee to answer on his failure to recommend a public inquiry. Again, the NDP showed its true colours in siding with Liberals and voting together to try to silence the opposition and hide the truth from Canadians.

Now, 19 sitting days before the summer break, the New Democrats are trying to save what is left of their political legacy by presenting a motion that would once again recommend that the government do things differently. They will then vote blindly against their very own motion. It is hypocrisy at its finest.

Foreign operatives should never be permitted to intimidate and harass Canadian people on Canadian soil, as the government has allowed them to do for several years. Rather than following the response of our neighbours across the border, who promptly shut down these police stations and charged those responsible, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety instead chose to spend their energy on misleading Canadians.

First, the minister said that the stations were all shut down; we then found out that they were still in operation in Montreal. Now, most recently, the minister comes clean and admits that there may be more illegal police stations run by Beijing across this country. To make matters worse, we have now learned that the government has been providing taxpayer funding to these groups, which are designed to implode our democracy. As reported by the National Post, Centre Sino-Québec is “one of two Quebec organizations ... under RCMP investigation for allegedly hosting a secret Chinese police station”, and it was given nearly \$160,000 worth of funds.

The solution is not difficult. It is very simple. It is to shut down all these police stations and create and implement a foreign influence registry to protect Canadians now. Canadians have no idea what to believe at this point. Who can blame them? Thus, it is imperative to have an open and honest public inquiry on foreign interference in this country to give citizens the answers they so need and deserve.

Unfortunately, we all know very well that the government's lack of action did not stop there. Rather, the Prime Minister showed his true colours when he chose to place his partisan interests above the safety of our institutions and of this country by selecting a family friend and member of the Beijing-funded Trudeau Foundation. He knowingly appointed a ski buddy, a cottage neighbour and a member of the Beijing-funded foundation to a fake job intended to legitimize the Liberal cover-up.

As well stated by Canada's next prime minister, in a country of 40 million people, the government could not find anyone who did not have connections to the Liberal Party or who had not been on the foundation. That is unbelievable. It is remarkable. We have so many distinguished prominent Canadians with the same credentials as former governor general David Johnston, and they ignored each and every one of those individuals and hand-picked Mr. Johnston for the job.

To make matters worse, while working on the report and during the investigation, Mr. Johnston sought advice from another trusted Liberal adviser, Sheila Block. This is a Liberal supporter who donated thousands of dollars exclusively to the Liberal Party of Canada.

If that were not enough, we have another layer of the cover-up cake. When David Johnston wanted to make sure that he was not in a conflict of interest in judging Beijing's interference in the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, we can guess whose opinion he sought. We have all kinds of retired Supreme Court justices in this country who are still alive, but he had to choose Mr. Frank Iacobucci of the Supreme Court of Canada, a member of the Trudeau Foundation. As a lawyer, I am absolutely gobsmacked and astounded that they cannot see this runaway freight train called “the conflict of interest”

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running smack dab into the middle of the heart of the current Liberal government.

• (1145)

It is not only a pure, active conflict of interest. It is the appearance of such an interest. Any lawyer who goes into court knows that many judges have completely recused themselves on the lower grounds of not doing anything that might compromise the integrity of the process. This process has been substantially compromised by the actions of David Johnston, the Prime Minister and his government.

In conclusion, sunshine is the best disinfectant, per CSIS. Let the public see. Let us let the public be the judge. Let us call a public inquiry. If NDP members really want to prove that they support a public inquiry, they must tell the Prime Minister that they will pull out of their coalition agreement if he does not call one. Stand up for Canadians, NDP.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is the New Democrats who are bringing forth this motion today, and we are standing up for Canadians.

Before I get started on my question, I first want to congratulate the Alberta NDP for winning every seat in Edmonton yesterday and the majority of seats in Calgary. Well done. It will be the most powerful opposition in Alberta history—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I cannot hear the hon. member speak. I would ask members, if they have questions and comments, to please wait. One of the Conservative members will be answering, and I know that he has the ability to do that. I would ask individuals to please not speak out of turn.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni can start from the top.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, again, congratulations to Edmonton and Calgary.

The Conservatives are really flinging mud—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order from the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I just feel it is important to correct the record. It is actually the Conservatives who won—

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

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I just want to correct my colleague. The Alberta NDP won every seat in Edmonton and the majority of seats in Calgary.

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We know the Conservatives are more interested in flinging mud than looking for a solution. This is a matter of foreign interference, not just Chinese interference. Russia and Iran are also carrying out major covert operations. We only have to look at the United States in 2016 for evidence of that, or to reports of the Russian financing of the “freedom convoy” in Ottawa in 2022, which we know the Conservatives supported. Singling out the Chinese has had a huge impact on the diaspora here in Canada.

Do the Conservatives agree with Canadians that we should be investigating all foreign interference in elections? Also, do they agree that we need to deal with foreign interference before we go into another election, not after?

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question had many layers to it, so I will try my best to respond.

Perhaps he is not aware that for the past year and a half, I was a sitting member of the standing joint committee reviewing the Emergencies Act declaration. I would encourage my colleague to confer with his colleague, the member for Hamilton Centre, an NDP colleague, who will easily debunk everything the member had to say about the element of Russian interference with respect to funding. Experts who testified at committee completely debunked that particular narrative. That was shared with the House numerous times, so I would recommend that he talk to his colleague.

• (1150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is somewhat disappointing to see the shameful behaviour of the members opposite when they undertake personal character assassinations of someone as distinguished as David Johnston. It is important to recognize that David Johnston was in fact a Stephen Harper appointment. To get a sense of the integrity of Mr. Johnston, I would suggest they read what Mr. Harper had to say about him. To get an even better sense of that, all they have to do is read what David Christopherson said at the PROC committee. Unfortunately, what we are witnessing is the shameful behaviour of character assassination against a distinguished Canadian. I say shame on the members opposite who are choosing to take this course.

My question to the member is this. Where was the Conservative Party when there was foreign interference being applied here in Canada while Stephen Harper and the Leader of the Conservative Party had the reins of power? It was nowhere.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, David Johnston sacrificed himself and his reputation to preserve the reputation and career of the Prime Minister. He is not the first friend of the Prime Minister who has sacrificed his reputation to preserve the reputation of the Prime Minister and the government, and he will probably not be the last.

Let us all remember our former attorney general and minister of justice, Jody Wilson-Raybould. Let us remember our former minister of health, Jane Philpott. Let us remember our former minister of finance, Bill Morneau. According to the government, just “random Liberals” are all they are. They were not senior ministers but random Liberals, and to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order from the hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, there seems to be a problem with the interpretation. When the member speaks, we hear a crackling noise on the line, which is making the interpreters' task more difficult. There may be a cellphone causing interference.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have asked this before of members. Please ensure that cellphones are not sitting on desks, because they create interference with interpretation.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant has the floor.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, in addition to those “random Liberals”, there is our former Privy Council clerk, Michael Wernick, who was also sacrificed to preserve the legacy of the Prime Minister. There is also, of course, his trusted friend, political adviser and principal secretary, Mr. Gerald Butts.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to turn my question back toward the opposition motion. It comes from the NDP, which might give the impression its members have found some courage to oppose this particular government.

I would like to ask the member a simple question. Does he believe that this new-found courage will continue? We expect them to stand with us and oppose and bring down an absolutely corrupt government. Does he expect this new-found courage to continue?

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, I am forever the optimist, and I hope my NDP colleagues have listened very carefully to the speeches so far on this side of the House. As I indicated at the end of my speech, I hope they will put their constituents and this country first before propping up this absolutely corrupt Liberal government.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order from the hon. member for Durham.

* * *

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ALLEGED INADEQUACY OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing my colleague from Brantford—Brant to finish his speech today.

I am rising on a question of privilege concerning efforts and actions by officials and agents of the People's Republic of China to interfere with me as a consequence of actions that I have taken here on the floor of our House of Commons.

On Friday, I received a briefing from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, that confirmed several matters to me that I will discuss in a few moments. In the notice I subsequently sent to the Speaker, I indicated that I required yesterday to reflect upon how best to present the information I received. While I recognize that the law of parliamentary privilege affords me absolute freedom of speech here in Parliament, subject only to the rules of the House itself, I also proudly held our late Queen's commission as an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces and have taken several oaths to protect our nation and its secrets.

It is because of this background that I have such profound respect for the men and women who swear such oaths to keep our country safe. Whether in the military, in a police service or in one of our security and intelligence agencies, these Canadians are charged with keeping us safe in a dangerous world. With the respect I have for those institutions in mind, I wrestled to find the right balance between satisfying the diverse demands on my conscience and saying what I am about to say today in my question of privilege.

In the Speaker's May 8 ruling on a similar but distinct question, at page 14106 of the Debates, where he noted "the gravity of the claims made by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills", the Speaker favourably cited the words of Mr. Speaker Milliken from May 29, 2008:

The Chair has always exercised discretion on this point given the need to balance the need for timeliness with the important responsibility members have of marshalling facts and arguments before raising matters of such import in the House.

In my case, it was a matter of not just marshalling the facts, but also giving adequate consideration as to how those facts could be presented in this House in a way that safeguards the sources and methods of our intelligence agencies and the personnel who work within them.

As I alluded to a moment ago, the facts of the People's Republic of China's campaign against me are separate and distinct from those that led to the Speaker's important ruling regarding the intimidation campaign orchestrated against the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. In that case, the *Globe and Mail* newspaper reported on intelligence leaks that indicated an accredited Chinese diplomat was involved in the targeting of this hon. member and his family.

This targeting appears to have been ordered following the February 2021 motion brought by that member recognizing the harms perpetrated against the Uyghur population in the Xinjiang region of China as genocide. After the hon. member raised his question of privilege, the government and CSIS acknowledged to him the veracity of the media reports.

The facts of my case are distinct, as they relate to an ongoing campaign of foreign interference to target me as both a member of this chamber and leader of the official opposition. Given my respect for the men and women who work for CSIS and the Communications Security Establishment, I will not provide the specific details from my intelligence briefing on the numerous threats identified to me, as I do not want any details to reveal sources or methods of collection.

While I have more detail than I am sharing with the House, I want to ensure that the public interest is properly served alongside

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ensuring that important intelligence gathered can continue unimpeded by appropriate parliamentary review. As an aside, the procedure and House affairs committee could, of course, obtain further details directly from the government under appropriate in camera cautions.

That said, I will break down the nature of the threats identified to me by CSIS into four distinct categories of threats. Each of these threats was intended to discredit me, to promote false narratives about my policies and to severely obstruct my work as a member of Parliament and as leader of the official opposition. The numerous examples also demonstrate that there was an orchestrated campaign of foreign interference in the 43rd Parliament and in the 2021 general election.

• (1200)

The first category of threat is related to foreign funding, specifically the payment of funds by the Chinese Communist Party through the united front work department, to create specific products of misinformation on me as a member of Parliament and as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. The second category of threat is related to human resources, specifically the use of groups of people working for or aligned with the United Front Work Department in Canada that were organized and directed by a foreign state to amplify misinformation efforts and undermine my work as a member of the chamber and as the leader of a parliamentary caucus. The third category of threat is related to foreign-controlled social media platforms. This category related specifically to the WeChat communications platform and its use to further the aims of the Chinese Communist Party and the United Front Work Department, and their campaign to spread misinformation to undermine and discredit my work in the chamber as the member of Parliament for Durham and as leader of the official opposition. The final category of threat outlined to me is related to voter suppression, specifically that intelligence indicated an active campaign of voter suppression against me, the Conservative Party of Canada and a candidate in one electoral district during the 2021 general election.

I must acknowledge at this point that I also believe that my privileges as a member and officer of Parliament were infringed upon by the government's unwillingness or inability to act on intelligence related to foreign interference. The briefing from CSIS confirmed to me what I had suspected for quite some time, which is that my parliamentary caucus and I were the target of a sophisticated misinformation and voter suppression campaign orchestrated by the People's Republic of China before and during the 2021 general election.

[*Translation*]

I also believe that my privileges as a member and as opposition leader were infringed upon by the government's unwillingness to act on intelligence related to foreign interference. The briefing from CSIS confirmed to me what I had suspected for quite some time, that my party, several members of my caucus and I were the targets of a misinformation and voter suppression campaign orchestrated by China before and during the 2021 general election.

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[English]

Not only were the multiple threats against me and members of my parliamentary caucus not raised to me by the government or security agencies during the 43rd Parliament, but these serious threats were also not communicated to us through the security and intelligence threats to elections task force created by the government in the 43rd Parliament to safeguard our election.

The context of the final months of proceedings in the chamber in the 43rd Parliament is also important to consider with respect to my privilege. The House, at the time, was seized with four separate document production orders forcing the government to be accountable to the House with respect to what actually happened at the Winnipeg laboratory and the firing of scientists with links to China. I know that you remember the time, Madam Speaker, because the government forced you into federal court over the issue, and forced me, as a member of the chamber and leader of the opposition, to seek intervenor status in that proceeding, which, ultimately, dissolution rendered moot. While denying our privileges as members for disclosure of these documents at the time, the government also denied me and other members of the chamber, including a member of the NDP, knowledge of identified foreign interference threats against us as parliamentarians. This is a matter that should concern all members of the House, regardless of party.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this is a separate and distinct matter from that which my colleague, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, raised to you a few weeks ago. The threats identified against me by CSIS did not relate to one single event or one single accredited diplomat; rather, the numerous threats identified to me provide proof of an ongoing campaign of foreign interference, intended not only to disrupt my work as a member but also to critically disrupt my work as the leader of a large parliamentary caucus in a minority Parliament.

● (1205)

Threats, disruption and interference of this scale actually violated the privilege of hundreds of members of the House. I stress this distinction because it is my respectful submission that it represents a question that is distinct from the one addressed in an earlier ruling or in the subsequent May 10 order of reference to the procedure and House affairs committee. It is worthy of its own separate finding of a prima facie contempt and committee investigation. Indeed, the situation here might be analogous to a couple of periods in the Speaker's early days as a member of the House. In spring 2005, there were no less than four prima facie cases of privilege, all related to member mailings, which were each referred to the procedure and House affairs committee in an overlapping manner. One of them originated from today's government House leader. Later, in November 2009, there were two prima facie cases of privilege related to members' householder mailings, which were also separately referred to committee again in an overlapping way.

In a ruling on May 10, 2005, Speaker Milliken said, at page 5885 of the Debates, words which probably have some echoes with the way the issues we are confronting this spring are cropping up. He said the following:

As the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills well knows, we have had a number of these kinds of questions of privilege raised in the House recently and

quite a number have been sent off to the procedure and House affairs committee, which is actively studying these issues, I believe, as we speak.

I am more than happy to permit him to move his motion and send the matter to committee, if he wishes. I am sure the committee will be interested in considering this one along with all the other ones that it is currently dealing with of a similar nature. There do seem to be a lot of these mailings these days.

There do seem to be a lot of foreign interference reports these days as well. The House should be seized with each of them individually. As I said, they should trouble all members of the chamber.

As members know, I have been a frequent commentator on Canada's foreign policy in the House. Specifically, I have been raising concerns relating to Canada-China relations for many years. Before serving as leader of the opposition, in both the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments, I served as the shadow minister for foreign affairs, the same parliamentary position held now by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. It was in that capacity that I was one of the first voices in the chamber to discourage the use of Huawei technology in Canada's 5G network. I, alongside other colleagues, raised concerns about the approval of sales of several Canadian technology companies without proper security assessments by the government. I, along with others, spoke about the issue of human rights in China and the abuse of the "one country, two systems" agreement in Hong Kong. Like many members of the House on all sides, I met with people from persecuted religious and cultural minorities. In fact, in many ways, my concerns about the government's approach to China culminated in a December 2019 motion to establish the first special committee on Canada-China relations.

This retaliatory campaign by a foreign government, targeting my work as a member of Parliament, arose from my participation in these, among other, proceedings of the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments. It is because of this advocacy that I have faced, in response, many years of an orchestrated retaliation campaign run from Beijing. These events occurred not only before and during the 2021 general election, which has been the subject of considerable reporting in the last year, but also prior to this election, and they were in the knowledge or control of the government, which refused to act. In fact, CSIS advised me that I will remain a target of Beijing's influence operations long after I leave the House this summer.

These timing aspects should pose no barriers to the Speaker's favourable ruling. Indeed, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, notes, at page 81, "Instances of contempt in one Parliament may even be punished during another Parliament. This area of parliamentary law is therefore extremely fluid and most valuable for the Commons to be able to meet novel situations."

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• (1210)

Although some of the actions in this retaliatory campaign of foreign interference were even more present during an election campaign, while Parliament was dissolved, there remained, throughout that time, a clear nexus among the retaliatory campaign in Parliament, parliamentary proceedings and through dissolution and election. The attacks on my privilege began before dissolution, were accelerated during the writ and resumed again afterwards. It shows how insidious this foreign interference has become. In this light, I would draw the Chair's attention to this passage at page 773 of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, fourth edition. It says, "Conduct that seeks to influence members in the performance of their public duties is perfectly proper and permissible. People may even exert pressure on members (for example, by threatening to withdraw support at the next election), unless such an attempt to influence becomes an attempt to intimidate, or there is a threat to do something that is improper in itself."

The right of all members of the House to go about their parliamentary duties free from intimidation, interference or any form of obstruction has been affirmed by a long line of precedents. The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills cited several of those concerning intimidation when presenting his own question of privilege, some of which you also quoted in your ruling on that matter. In the interest of time, I commend those to your consideration, but perhaps the most powerful words are your own, from your May 8 ruling, at page 14107 of the Debates: "The Chair agrees that the matter raised by the member, that is that a foreign entity tried to intervene in the conduct of our proceedings through a retaliatory scheme targeting him and his family, squarely touches upon the privileges and immunities that underpin our collective ability to carry out our parliamentary duties unimpeded. On the face of it, the Chair believes this matter to be serious enough to take priority of debate over all other parliamentary proceedings."

One new aspect that my situation raises is what our authorities consider to be a form of "obstruction". *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at pages 111 and 112, offers this explanation:

A Member may also be obstructed or interfered with in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions by non-physical means....

It is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and, as such, constitute prima facie cases of privilege. However, some matters found to be prima facie include the damaging of a Member's reputation...[and] the intimidation of Members and their staff....

The unjust damaging of a Member's good name might be seen as constituting an obstruction....

Speaker Fraser, on May 5, 1987, at page 5766 of the Debates, ruled:

The privileges of a Member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damage of a reputation could constitute such an impediment. The normal course of a member who felt himself or herself to be defamed would be the same as that available to any other citizen: recourse to the courts under the laws of defamation and the possibility of damages to substitute for the harm that may be done. However, should the alleged defamation take place on the floor of the House of Commons, this recourse is not available.

Where these campaigns were masterminded by diplomats accredited to Canada, the diplomats enjoy legal immunities under the

Vienna Conventions. Therefore, just as in the example cited by Speaker Fraser, ordinary recourse to the courts of law is simply not possible under the circumstances.

To be clear, this parliamentary privilege is not being asserted, nor do I seek to assert it, against any Canadian who exercises his or her democratic right to enter into the parliamentary and political debate and to criticize politicians for the stands or policies they take. Joseph Maingot, at page 235 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, articulates the appropriate balance here:

• (1215)

...all interferences with Members' privileges of freedom of speech, such as editorials and other public comment, are not breaches of privilege even though they influence the conduct of Members in their parliamentary work. Accordingly, not every action by an outside body that may influence the conduct of a Member of Parliament as such could now be regarded as a breach of privilege, even if it were calculated and intended to bring pressure on the Member to take or to refrain from taking a particular course. But any attempt by improper means to influence or obstruct a Member in his [or her] parliamentary work may constitute contempt. What constitutes an improper means of interfering with Members' parliamentary work is always a question depending on the facts of each case.

In investigating a past contempt concerning the prejudicing of a member's reputation, the procedure and House affairs committee explained the heart of the reputational concern succinctly at paragraph 38 of its 51st report tabled in November 2005. It stated, "Members of Parliament are public figures, and their reputations and integrity are among their most valuable assets."

The same committee, when reviewing misleading statements about a member made in one of these ten-percenter cases I mentioned earlier, wrote, in its 38th report tabled in May 2005, as follows:

The content of the document, while not complained of by other Members whose constituents received similar mailings, must be considered in relation to [the member for Windsor West]. Under such an analysis, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that it is inaccurate and misleading with respect to him. [The member] noted that he had received complaints from constituents as a result of the mailing. By unjustly damaging his reputation with voters in his riding, it thereby impairs his ability to function as a Member.

That last sentence brings me to some important points. First, whether the defamatory or misleading comments were made inside or outside of my riding, they, nonetheless, must be considered in relation to me and to the unjust damaging of my reputation within my riding.

Second, at the time, I was the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. I was an officer of this House with national responsibilities, which I believe requires the Speaker to consider matters through an additional lens. By unjustly damaging the reputation of the leader of a national party, it has the consequence of impairing his or her ability to function as one of those political officers of this House, but also of indirectly implicating all of my colleagues, whom I was proud to lead as leader of a parliamentary caucus.

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Third, we must truly understand the goal of Beijing's retaliatory campaign here. The Communist government's ideal outcome is to have its critics pull their punches and turn a blind eye. It is to create, at the end of the day, a chilling effect on our public policy and the debates in this chamber, a chilling effect on our parliamentary democracy.

At its heart, Beijing's goal and detailed actions toward the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, myself and other members of this chamber stifle free debate in this House. The special committee on rights and immunities of members explained the importance of freedom of speech in Parliament in its first report tabled in April 1977 as:

...a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, to say what they feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national interest and the aspirations of their constituents.

It is this very principle which the House must uphold, must vindicate and must defend robustly for it is what ensures that we are vibrant democracy, where the people's representatives defend the people's interests, not vested interests.

Earlier, I cited an authority for the proposition that the area of parliamentary law of concern here remains fluid in order to allow the House to meet new and novel threats. This novel and expanding situation of foreign interference in our politics seeking to silence the debates of this Parliament must be met and our parliamentary democracy must be defended.

• (1220)

It is important for me to raise this issue before I finish my service in the House in the coming weeks. It is also important for me, and all of us collectively, to raise this critical issue for Canadians who might contemplate joining the House and standing for office. We can no longer ignore this interference and the chill effect it will have on free speech and our debates. We owe it to the next generation of members of Parliament from all backgrounds, cultures and experiences to be able to take their place in this chamber to build on our democracy unencumbered by threats, intimidation or pressure.

As my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, observed, members of Parliament, and especially opposition members, are certainly not ordinary Canadians who can rely on the government, the executive branch, to discharge its role as defender of the realm. The problem does not lie with our proud, hard-working intelligence agencies; it lies in the blindness to their activities by some figures in this government and in some of the senior offices that advise it. The government has gone from one diversion to another for years to deflect its responsibility in tackling this scourge of foreign interference that has limited the privileges of several members of the House. They are being willfully blind to attacks on our parliamentary democracy.

I could go on at length about my views concerning the SITE task force, the panel of five senior civil servants, and review the inaction or incompetence of those structures and how disappointed I was in the report of the special rapporteur, but I acknowledge that might be straying into debate. Besides, the House and the whole country

know first-hand my views on the special rapporteur's review process, because when he met with me, the review was largely completed. He did not even seek input from a member who our intelligence agencies knew was being targeted by Beijing. I will simply say that rather than restoring faith in our institutions and democratic process, the perceived conflict of interest of the special rapporteur, the outcome-driven terms of reference he was given and the final report that followed them have actually deepened mistrust and further demonstrated the need for an independent review.

The conversation and inquiry do not need to wait until there is a Conservative government elected and it determines to appoint an independent public inquiry. The longer there are delays, the longer there will be embarrassing leaks and headlines that will only continue to erode public trust in our institutions and in our parliamentary democracy. This historic and proud House of Commons has the duty and responsibility to stand up to attacks on the privilege of every single member of this chamber. Inaction to do so amounts to muting the voices sent to Ottawa to defend the interests of their constituents.

So, let us do it for all members of this chamber, on all sides of the House, and for the Canadians who might want to join the House in the future. As the defender of our rights and privileges, this effort starts with you, Mr. Speaker. Should you agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that this amounts to a prima facie case of contempt, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion at that time.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his statement.

I believe there are a couple of interventions.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I have enormous respect for the member for Durham. I would like to review the blues, and I reserve the right for the NDP to intervene on this question of privilege without delay.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we will do likewise and review what the member has stated and get back to the Speaker in due time.

• (1225)

The Deputy Speaker: Of course, we ask that members come back as soon as possible so that we can review this quickly and come back to the House as soon as possible.

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

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has been a while.

Business of Supply

We will get into the debate again. I will start by reminding members that all the Chinese diaspora groups advocating for human rights in Canada and Quebec demand a public inquiry into Beijing's interference.

Mehmet Tohti, representing the Uyghur nation in Canada, Hong Kong pro-democracy dissidents, Falun Gong practitioners, and supporters of independence for Tibet, all of whom were already experiencing Chinese intimidation tactics on Canadian soil long before this scandal broke, slammed the Liberals' actions in *The Globe and Mail* just this weekend. These groups also called for an independent public inquiry. For the Liberals not to listen to the opposition is one thing, but for them to not listen to these people is, in my view, a sign of total disrespect to the first victims of this interference on Canadian and Quebec soil.

I forgot to say that I will be sharing my time with my good friend and colleague, the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

We need to talk about one thing: The government needs to stop using the excuse of security surrounding Chinese interference to avoid an independent public inquiry. Just yesterday in the House, I was referring to the case of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen who was tortured in Syria. There were so many security issues in his case, yet a public and independent inquiry was held into this matter. Moreover, this inquiry was initiated by a Liberal government. The Liberals are able to initiate such an inquiry when they want to, so we wonder why they do not want to in this case.

There are so many other examples of commissions where there were security issues. I am thinking of the Charbonneau commission in Quebec. There were security and secrecy issues. There was the Rouleau commission. It is possible to set up these independent public inquiries even if there are security issues.

What this tells me is that the Liberal government is trying to bury the current Chinese interference crisis. Above all, it is trying to bury its inexplicable inaction, when it has known for many years that China was trying to interfere in our democratic process.

The Prime Minister must have known that there was Chinese interference in the last two elections. Nonetheless, he decided to hide this from the public by creating the position of special rapporteur and handing it to David Johnston, who will be discussed at length today. This is the same David Johnston who seems to be in a blatant conflict of interest over the whole issue and has recommended against holding a public inquiry. Any law professor would confirm that an apparent conflict of interest is no different from an actual conflict of interest. All this is happening despite the crisis of confidence in Canada's democratic system.

It will therefore come as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois supports the motion moved by our New Democrat colleague calling on David Johnson "to step aside from his role as special rapporteur" and calling on the government "to urgently establish a public commission of inquiry".

Here is what the motion calls for regarding the public inquiry. It should be:

- (i) led by an individual selected with unanimous support from all recognized parties in the House,

- (ii) granted the power to review all aspects of foreign interference from all states...

- (b) [It should] instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to provide a report to the House as soon as possible with a recommendation on who could lead such a commission of inquiry and what its terms of reference should include.

The Prime Minister can talk up David Johnston's many qualities all he wants, but the fact remains that he is a family friend. Not surprisingly, he was a member of the Trudeau Foundation. Worse still, he apparently has such close ties to China that the very democratic Xi Jinping called him an old friend of China. With friends like that, I would be very careful.

Despite all of that, the Minister of Public Safety said yesterday in the House that it was important to "invite...everyone to have an open and transparent conversation about creating new tools to defend our democratic institutions". I agree with him. Let us talk about democracy. We will talk about democracy. Everything we do today in this debate is based on the concept of democracy.

I must digress briefly, before coming back to democracy. I do not know whether my colleagues are familiar with the Airbus scandal, so I will quickly refresh everyone's memories. In 1988, under a government led by former prime minister Brian Mulroney, Airbus had been awarded a procurement contract for 34 aircraft for Air Canada at a cost of \$1.8 billion Canadian. At the time, Air Canada was wholly owned by the government.

- (1230)

According to Democracy Watch, good old Mr. Johnston was also tapped by none other than former prime minister Stephen Harper to help Mr. Mulroney, who was accused of taking bribes. After being appointed by the Harper government, Mr. Johnston gave the public inquiry such a narrow mandate that it could not examine the contracts awarded to Airbus and the corruption surrounding them, including the cash given to Mr. Mulroney. Nonetheless, he is the one the Liberals asked to investigate Chinese interference. They really know how to pick them. We are talking about \$300,000 in cash from a criminal, Schreiber, in what is now known as the Airbus scandal. They are all the same. When it comes down to choosing between Liberals and Conservatives, we choose the worst.

We were talking about democracy. Mr. Johnston's preliminary report has been lambasted by the public as a whole, by a large number of media outlets, by politicians, and yet he does not recommend a public inquiry, despite his finding that China is trying to interfere in Canadian politics.

Since I was elected to the House in 2019, I have repeatedly seen the minority Liberal government, which, we must remember, was elected by less than a third of Canadian voters, fail to respect the democratic choices of the House. Here is a good example. In 2020, a majority of the House voted in favour of a motion calling for the number of weeks of employment insurance sickness benefits to be increased from 15 to 50. I have seen nothing come of it. The government does not respect the elected members of the House, a majority of whom voted in favour of that motion.

Business of Supply

The House has twice voted in favour of an independent public inquiry into Chinese interference, and both times, the Liberal government refused, even though an inquiry has been requested by over two-thirds of the population and over 68% of the population represented by the opposition members. That is democracy.

I would like to ask a question. How can the Liberal government talk about democracy and claim to defend democracy when it does not respect democracy in its own Parliament? The worst part of all this is that, after tabling his highly criticized report, Mr. Johnston went even further by repeating the government line that the problem was the media and politicians, who he felt had done a bad job.

While we listen to these inane statements, the Prime Minister is trying to stall for time. With numerous members of the Chinese diaspora speaking out about being harassed and coerced by the Chinese government, there is little doubt that the known facts are just the tip of the iceberg.

Here is what I find even more interesting in this matter. According to Mr. Johnston, the member for Don Valley North is not guilty of endangering the lives of the two Michaels. Mr. Johnston therefore cites that member as part of his argument against launching an independent inquiry. That member may rejoin the Liberal caucus, as the Prime Minister has said he is open to the idea. Even so, that member, the person most affected by this matter, voted in favour of an independent public inquiry. This is madness. I feel like I have stepped into some kind of bizarre world. It is clear that the public has good reason to be cynical about democracy in Canada nowadays.

Everyone knows the government is trying to buy time. Meanwhile, certain communities are suffering. As I said at the beginning of my speech, every human rights group in Canada and Quebec from the Chinese diaspora is calling for a public inquiry into Beijing's interference. That includes Uyghurs, Hongkongers, Tibetans, Taiwanese, entire communities that are being robbed of their culture and traditions. It includes men, women and children who are experiencing violence and persecution. It includes members of those communities who are here in Quebec and Canada and who fear for their safety, who fear for the safety of their loved ones, who are the main victims of this interference in our elections. They are calling for an independent public inquiry. Will the government listen to them? Will it show these people some respect?

How can it possibly ignore them? I put that question to the House yesterday, and I was told there would be reassurance. Does anyone really think those people feel reassured? If they did, would they all have told *The Globe and Mail* that Mr. Johnston's report signalled a sad day for Canadian democracy? Not listening to us is one thing, but not listening to the Uyghurs, the Tibetans, the Taiwanese and the Hongkongers is another. It shows utter insensitivity toward these people.

• (1235)

I am here to say that I stand with them. We will support them. We want the same thing they do.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, at times we can barely tell the difference between the Conservatives and the Bloc members when it comes to certain issues, and those issues are more and more frequent. It is unfortunate because we have seen a character assassination of an outstanding Canadian. He is someone who was appointed by Stephen Harper, a Conservative prime minister.

He has provided a report. Part of that report is an annex and, to receive and read the annex, one has to get a certain security clearance. The leader of the Bloc Party has chosen to say that he wants to be completely ignorant of all those facts. He does not want the briefing. The briefing would explain why the former governor general chose not to recommend a public inquiry.

Could the member give a clear indication as to why the Bloc Party, more specifically the leader of the Bloc Party, is refusing to get the clearance necessary to see the documents that led to the recommendations of the former governor general?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I was expecting a more difficult question than that. In the same question, my colleague said that we are like the Conservatives, but he also said that they each used the same person to cover up a scandal. He said in his question that they were the same, that the Liberals were doing the same thing as the Conservatives, that they were using the same person to cover up a scandal. That is something else.

I will answer my colleague's question. If we said no, it is because the people we work with, the victims of Chinese interference, asked us not to do it. They say that we should ask for an independent public inquiry and that the business of getting security clearance and not being able to talk about what was said is a Liberal trap.

It is incredible to see how much they are concealing things from Canadians and not even trying to hide it. They say that the annex explains why there will not be an independent public inquiry. We will be able to find out, but we will not be able to talk about it. Canadians will not know, and we will not be able to tell them. That is incredible. I cannot believe that they actually believe what they are saying.

Let us get back to what really matters here: These people do not even respect democracy in their own Parliament. How can we believe them when it comes to investigating interference in our own elections?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech.

I would like for us to take a step back from what is happening right now. In fact, as he said, this is the second time the House is preparing to vote on a motion asking the government for an independent public inquiry. We remind the government that it is a minority government and that the majority of this Parliament is asking for a public inquiry. The majority of the members representing Quebecers and Canadians are asking for an independent public inquiry. It is the government's duty to make that happen.

Business of Supply

I would like my colleague to remind members that this is not an isolated case and that it is not the first time the government has failed to be transparent and disregarded democracy in this country.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, we are getting more and more evidence that the government is so full of itself that it thinks it is a majority government and forgets it is only a minority. It does not respect the will of its own Parliament, its own House of Commons.

Worse yet, and to my surprise today, the Liberals came in with an arrogant and aggressive attitude. They are treating the motion moved by their NDP friends with arrogance and condescension. In fact, the NDP should stop supporting the government, because it is not right to be spoken to that way. How is it that, when they do not even respect the motions passed by a majority of the House of Commons, they can still come in with an arrogant and egregiously insolent attitude?

It is enough to make anyone fall out of their chair. Luckily, our chairs are solid and well made. How long will that be the case? That is a good question.

• (1240)

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise to speak. I want to say hello to my constituents in Trois-Rivières, who talk to me about Chinese interference every weekend. They talked to me about it again recently and asked me what is going to happen with the special rapporteur. We do not really know.

Stromae sang, “I’m not alone in feeling all alone”. Mr. Johnston is also all alone.

We are here today to discuss the NDP’s motion, which we support, even though it does require some clarification. Of course, the House called on the government to launch a public inquiry back in March. Now, the NDP is calling for the special rapporteur to recuse himself. I should really call him the “special raconteur” because he is telling us such a fascinating story. The NDP is also asking that the public inquiry be led by an individual selected with unanimous support from all recognized parties in the House. I am going to voice a concern about that, because unanimous support is a lot to ask. I think it would be better to aim for the support of two-thirds of the House or something like that. Nevertheless, we understand that Mr. Johnston is the only one who thinks he is right. The Canadian, Quebec and U.S. media are all saying that the situation is untenable, but he is digging in his heels.

I did not like the tone of the previous debates. Even in the weeks leading up to the analysis of today’s motion, we were told that Mr. Johnston is an illustrious individual with unrivalled experience and a vision that has prepared him for this sort of job.

All of those things may be true. However, the problem that we have with Mr. Johnston is not his past. It is his present. Right now, he is in an untenable position. He is in a conflict of interest, or, at the very least, there is the appearance of a conflict of interest.

In both cases, why do we talk about conflict of interest when it comes to ethics? It is because conflicts of interest can undermine trust, and trust is the cornerstone of democracy. To elect someone is

to place one’s trust in someone else. In a case like this one, trust was placed in the government, which decided to subcontract a decision to a person who is far from independent. All of this can affect trust and arouse mistrust. We should not be surprised if it eventually leads to distrust.

People are tired of seeing this sort of thing. Those who watch question period know that there is a reason it is not called “answer period”. Whenever we ask a question about Mr. Johnston’s independence, the reply we get is that he is a model citizen. If my children had answered me that way when they were young, I would have scolded them for it, because that is not a real answer.

Foreign interference is nothing new. It has gotten worse over the years. Chinese interference flourished around the world in 2019, but the free trade agreements facilitated economic dependence and exchanges on various research and industrial matters. Interference became more and more common starting in the 1980s. Today, we cannot deny the fact that foreign interference exists.

The government’s solution was to appoint someone and make up a title for him. In Quebec, the French word “rapporteur” is not a good quality. It is more of a defect. A “rapporteur” is someone who reports on what other people said, and not always in the right way. Nevertheless, they decided to appoint someone. The Prime Minister, who is the only one who can call a public inquiry, because that is his privilege, his power and his responsibility, said no. He decided that he did not want to be caught out and that he would delegate the responsibility to someone else and respect their decision.

I am sorry, but Mr. Johnston does not have the right to decide whether or not a public inquiry should be held. That privilege belongs to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister can consult his party, and he could have consulted Mr. Johnston. He can consult all he wants, but it is not up to a third party to decide whether an inquiry should be called. That is called responsibility.

Honestly, responsibility is something people do not pay enough attention to today. Let me explain the concept. “Responsibility” comes from two Latin words: *res* and *spondere*.

Res means “thing”, and *spondere*, which gave us the English word “sponsor”, means “to promise”.

• (1245)

This means that someone who is responsible is someone who can make a promise. Logically, one would think that the Prime Minister can make a promise. However, there are three criteria for responsibility. Does the person have authority to act? In this case, the answer is yes. Does the person have sufficient authority to act? The answer is yes. The most important question is, does the person have a desire to act? In this case, I saw no desire to act. The Liberals saw the NDP’s motion in March, but they disregarded it. They do not have much more regard for today’s opposition motion.

Business of Supply

Let us get back to Mr. Johnston, all alone in his corner. His reputation, his experience and the fact that he was appointed by Mr. Harper are the arguments coming from across the aisle. They have been repeated ad nauseam, which is a phrase meaning a very long time. That is not the problem. The problem is that there is no trust.

I was told I should have trust in Mr. Johnston because he is extraordinarily credible. I will repeat it in the House: Trust is “credibility plus legitimacy”. In this case, we do not have what comes after the “plus”. Mr. Johnston's legitimacy is contested by everyone except Mr. Johnston. My grandfather used to say that when someone feels like they are the only one who is right, there is probably something wrong. He has no legitimacy.

It has been said that Mr. Johnston participated to a certain degree in the Trudeau Foundation. It has been said that he sent his children to study in China. We do not know how he paid for that, though, because sending children to study in China is expensive. It has also been said that Mr. Johnston sponsored a Confucius Institute. I am not condemning Mr. Johnston for all this. I am simply saying that it affects his credibility, so much so that he has none left.

If there is no trust in the process, then as an ethicist, I would say that the process is useless. The government is delaying a decision because we got a striptease of revelations over time. Every time we almost get somewhere, there is not enough trust.

People are asking us why we do not look at the documents. In my opinion, it is a trap. The Liberals want to force us to remain silent. We will not paint ourselves into a corner. Moreover, we do not think we should listen to someone we do not believe is legitimate, period.

I now have a question concerning the NDP's motion. As my colleagues know, we will support the motion, but I still have a question for the NDP. If everything in this motion happens, after the adoption of a motion in March, what will happen? The hon. member for Burnaby South will see the documents. The hon. member for Burnaby South will be outraged. What will happen then? Will he get mad? Will he withdraw his support?

What is interesting is that withdrawing their support for the deal between the parties does not mean the government will fall, but there will be more tension in the negotiations, and I think that this dimension ought to be added to the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will give a bit of a different approach from that of the member opposite and recognize that foreign interference is something that is not new to Canada. In fact, we have seen it now for well over a decade. When I take a look at what the former administration did, I find that it did nothing. Even when the leader of the Conservative Party was the minister responsible, he chose to do nothing on the issue of foreign interference.

We have taken a number of actions to date on the issue of foreign interference, and I am wondering if the member could speculate as to what he believes the Conservative government should have been doing, if anything, when the issue was raised with that particular

government. Does he believe that this is the only government that has been in a position to deal with the issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Mr. Speaker, we cannot rewrite the past. If the previous Harper government did nothing, quite frankly, that changes nothing with regard to today's foreign interference. That is where we are now.

Should the former government have taken measures? Maybe, maybe not. Right now, the member across the way is asking me whether it is a problem that the previous government did nothing. The result we are faced with today is that this is where we stand now and we must act.

It is important to take action. In fact, it is necessary, because failing to take action only encourages foreign interference. I am not saying that nothing was done, but it is time to do more.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Bloc will be supporting our motion. I am a bit perplexed at the Bloc leader's decision to not look at the confidential annex. It seems to me that more information at this point is good. My understanding of the argument against seeing the annex is that it would preclude certain statements or actions based on the information, but those statements and actions are not currently an option for the Bloc leader because he does not know what is in there. It would seem that the leader could both see what is in the annex and push with us for a public inquiry, as they are not mutually exclusive.

Could the member expand on why the leader of the Bloc Québécois refuses to look at this additional information?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I really appreciate his concern and wisdom.

I would say that, right now, there is one person, that is, Mr. Johnston, who is saying that he has seen something, but that he cannot talk about it. I am not sure that having three other people also tell us that they have seen something but cannot talk about it will restore public confidence.

My intervention is based on the need to restore trust. I do not think that Mr. Johnston's suggested method is the only one; there could have been others. Also, I do not think this is the best way, and I would like to hear about others. As we know, in essence, I am asking for Mr. Johnston's recusal, as is my colleague. I am not about to start following his recommendations, either.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his speech. I particularly enjoyed how he ended it with something of a question. He wondered what will happen otherwise. He did not say it in quite those words. He said it more clearly. Parents who have raised young children will know that we often have to threaten them to get them to brush their teeth. However, the children eventually figure out that these threats will never be put into execution, and they use that knowledge to manipulate their parents.

Today, the NDP has presented an extremely serious motion, written in a serious tone, as the subject at hand warrants.

I would like to ask my colleague from Trois-Rivières what answer he is expecting when he asks whether the NDP will continue to support the government despite the indignation it is expressing today. If not, what will happen?

Mr. René Villemure: Mr. Speaker, the idea of “what will happen” is what is missing from their motion. It is very important because, right now, the NDP has real power. It has the option of withdrawing its support for its deal with the government. If it withdrew its support, the government would be forced to act a bit differently.

I wish the NDP would tell us today that it is tabling this motion and that, if it does not work, it will withdraw its support for the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House. This is, again, the New Democratic Party showing leadership in the House of Commons, as we did on March 23, with the NDP being the principal party supporting democracy in our country ensuring that we have free and unfettered elections.

I would be remiss if I did not congratulate the New Democratic MLAs elected in Alberta last night. It was a complete sweep of Edmonton. There is not a single Conservative MLA now left in the city of Edmonton. It was also a sweep of the majority of the city of Calgary. Calgary is now orange. The majority of the MLAs now representing Calgary in the Alberta legislature are New Democrats. The reality is that, as we know, in a democracy every single vote counts, and 2,500 votes going to the NDP rather than the Conservative Party would have meant an NDP majority government.

We certainly congratulate Ms. Smith for her very narrow victory. We also congratulate Rachel Notley for an outstanding breakthrough across Alberta, electing every single MLA in the city of Edmonton and electing most of the MLAs in the city of Calgary. That is the hallmark of a democratic system. That is why we do this work. With the support of Canadians in a free and democratic society, we have the ability to choose our government and choose our representatives. This is absolutely fundamental.

That is why the NDP, the member for Burnaby South and the member for Vancouver East, who spoke so eloquently, and I will come back to her comments a little later on, have brought forward this motion today, as we did back on March 23. We put forward the original motion on the public inquiry. Now we are putting in a strengthened motion, and I will come to the details of that in a moment.

One might ask why the official opposition is not doing this work. I have no idea. I leave it to the official opposition to explain themselves, and why the NDP has been doing all of the heavy lifting on this issue from day one to ensure that we deal with not only the important issue of Chinese intervention but also the important issue of Russian intervention, which seems to have had such an impact on the so-called convoy movement that caused such misery in downtown Ottawa, cutting thousands of seniors off from their groceries and thousands of people with disabilities off from their medica-

Business of Supply

tions, and closing down thousands of businesses. All of this, as we know from the National Observer series of articles, was tied to Russian foreign interference. We also know that both Canadians of Indian origin and Canadians of Iranian origin have been targeted by their foreign governments.

We are talking about a spectrum of foreign interference. The point of privilege that was raised by the member for Durham was very disturbing. It was about the extent of Chinese foreign interference. We believe we need to get to the bottom of that. That is why we need a public inquiry. We also believe that we need to examine the full extent of foreign interference in our elections, so that when we have an election, such as Alberta did last night, we know it would be free and unfettered, that it would provide results, and that moving forward, Canadians could have confidence in a democratic system that has been subject to the highest possible democratic norms and standards.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

First, I would like to talk about what is in the NDP motion. My colleague from the Bloc Québécois touched on it earlier, but I would like to talk about what it means.

On March 23, the NDP tabled a motion that received the approval of all of the opposition parties and all independent members. They all voted in favour of the NDP's motion on March 23. This gave the special rapporteur and the government an indication and a direction.

Today we are proposing that a public inquiry be launched as soon as possible to “fully restore the confidence of Canadians in the integrity of our democratic institutions”. We also want to move on to the next stages to make sure the public inquiry takes place.

We are also calling on the Right Hon. David Johnston to step aside from his role. I will come back to that.

The Bloc raised an important question earlier about the possibility of having the House give an instruction. As members know, an opposition motion can give an instruction to the House or a committee. The motion requests that the House:

instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to provide a report to the House as soon as possible with a recommendation on who could lead such a commission of inquiry and what its terms of reference should include.

Every member, whether they are a member of the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois or they are an independent member, needs to ask themselves the question this week. The NDP have already asked the question and will of course support this motion. Before proceeding to the sacred act of voting, everyone here should ask themselves if they agree with asking the Right Hon. David Johnston to step aside and giving this instruction to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. In other words, this is about acting like an adult, like the member for Burnaby South has often done in the House of Commons, and taking the next steps to find this person and entrusting them with the mandate of launching a public inquiry. It is extremely important.

Business of Supply

We are already suggesting what comes next. People are asking what the next step will be. They just need to read the motion. I am saying that to the members who have been asking what will come next. Since this morning, we have been debating a motion that explains what comes next.

The NDP does not think like the other parties. We are not questioning Mr. Johnston's credentials. He has had an exemplary career and is a man of integrity. He is someone people trust a lot. However, although the NDP trusts the individual, that does not necessarily mean that we will accept his report and his recommendations when the work is not sound.

This work is not sound for two reasons. First, as my colleague, the member from Vancouver East, has already said, the team cannot include a legal adviser who donated to the Liberal Party for years. She donated thousands of dollars. He was a major Liberal Party donor. In our view, entrusting this task to that individual showed a lack of judgment. That does not mean we are questioning the entire career of this very distinguished man, but questions must be raised when this work is assigned to someone who has given so much money to the Liberal Party. I believe the member for Burnaby South has already pointed out that lack of judgment.

Then, when we look at the report, we see that it is neither convincing nor sound. It is weak. I know my colleague from Vancouver East spoke about all the other contradictions in the report. According to the rapporteur, one of the main reasons for not holding a public inquiry into such sensitive issues is that the inquiry could not be held in public. However, public inquiries always deal with sensitive and confidential information. That has been the case for all the public inquiries we have seen.

• (1300)

As has been noted many times in the House today, people can distinguish between confidential information that should not be disclosed and information that is in the public domain. We cannot agree with a proposal that we feel is simply wrong. In general, the mandate of a public inquiry is to handle confidential and sensitive information.

In my opinion, the biggest reason that the Right Hon. David Johnston raises in his report, that leads to today's motion, is when he states that, "while we could launch a Public Inquiry on the issues I am required to address for my October report under my TOR, there would be a clear overlap with the work I have already started doing".

He himself states that his work as a special rapporteur precludes a public inquiry. That overlap means that, as a special rapporteur, his position blocks the possibility of a public inquiry. It is written in black and white. The special rapporteur honestly states that, in his view, the overlap is something that should be taken into consideration.

This is exactly why the NDP is asking for a public inquiry. The public is asking for it, Parliament is asking for it, and all parliamentarians, except for those belonging to the Liberal Party, are asking for it. Now we have a special rapporteur who says very clearly that we cannot have this public inquiry if he is still in his position. This is an extremely important aspect.

What are we doing with the motion we are tabling? As we did on March 23, we are going to show leadership. It is not the official opposition that is doing this. It is the NDP that is being the adult in the House by showing leadership and setting out the next steps.

As a Parliament, we sent this motion and this vote to the special rapporteur. Basically, the special rapporteur says that, because he has already started this job, a public inquiry cannot be held. He says that we cannot keep the information secret. We already know that this claim is wrong. It is clear that we could do both. What he is saying is that if there is to be a public inquiry, he will have to resign.

• (1305)

[English]

That is where we end up and that is why the NDP has brought forward this motion. The member for Vancouver East was so passionate in talking about the impacts this morning of the lack of a public inquiry and this foreign interference that touches the foreign interference that we saw from Russia in the so-called convoy that caused such misery, in the Chinese foreign interference that the member for Durham just spoke about, the member for Vancouver East has spoken about and the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has spoken about. These are of broad concern, like the concerns from the diaspora of Canadians of Indian origin and Canadians of Iranian origin who have seen foreign interference from their governments. We need to move forward on this.

The most substantial part of what we are presenting today is not so much the public inquiry. The public inquiry is already something that Canadians are galvanized about and rallied behind. They believe that, as do almost all of the parliamentarians except those from the governing party. We believe that we need to move forward with a public inquiry. Of that there is no doubt, but to do that we have to reference the report that the special rapporteur produced.

I want to thank the special rapporteur, the Right Honourable David Johnston, for his lifelong service to Canada. He has worked, as we know, with Conservative and Liberal governments and has always shown the highest respect for democratic values. Of that we have no doubt. The fact that he issued this report, and now parliamentarians are called to judge that report, is something that he needs to heed. Each member of Parliament, in the coming hours, will weigh how their vote should go on this motion.

The first part of the motion reiterates the public inquiry and directs the Prime Minister to put in place a public inquiry.

The second really follows what the special rapporteur has so clearly identified in his report. I flagged the French version a little while ago, and now I am going to flag the exact quote within the English version, on page 4, at lines 19 and 20, where he says, "we could launch a Public Inquiry...[but] there would be a clear overlap with the work I have already started doing". What the special rapporteur, the Right Honourable David Johnston, is saying is that he is an impediment to a public inquiry being held.

Business of Supply

Therefore, the message parliamentarians will be called upon to decide is this. If the Right Honourable David Johnston heeds a parliamentary vote, which I believe he will as he is an honourable man, and if the majority of parliamentarians vote as the motion very clearly calls for, and I come back to the wording around this, which is that we “call on the Right Hon. David Johnston to step aside from his role as special rapporteur”, knowing his career, his honesty and his integrity from his background, which the NDP has never put into question, I believe if that is the choice that each parliamentarian will make in the coming hours, to call upon him to step down, he will do that. I have no doubt that, because of the integrity he has shown in his background and years of public service, he will respect this parliamentary vote. That is a key element.

The NDP, the member for Burnaby South, the member for Vancouver East and the member for North Island—Powell River have all worked extensively on this subject and have already included the next step, which is a referral to the procedure and House affairs committee and, because it is a referral, it would allow for a direction from the House that the committee make it a priority. The committee would then be called upon to work to find out who would be the appropriate person to lead the commission of inquiry and what its terms of reference should include.

If the special rapporteur, the Right Honourable David Johnston, does what I believe he will do, which is to step down after facing this parliamentary vote, that would send a clear indication that parliamentarians, our democracy and the democratic will of this House have asked him to step down and I believe he will. By doing so, the procedure and House Affairs committee would have already started the work, which would be the next step to finding a consensus on who could lead such a commission of inquiry and what its terms of reference should include. Therefore, the NDP motion today is a package that reinforces our democracy and allows a commission of inquiry to report back before the next election.

For those who are saying we should have an election now, while at the same time are saying that foreign interference is real, meaningful, has an impact on our elections and that we have to worry about it, that is simply inconsistent, juvenile and petulant talk. We need adults in the room. The member for Burnaby South and the member for Vancouver East, who has sponsored this motion, are showing the adult way through by using our parliamentary tools to put in place the next step, which is a public inquiry. As parliamentarians, each one of us has to decide whether we are asking the Right Honourable David Johnston to resign. That decision the MPs make will start a series of steps that will follow.

• (1310)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP members want to have it both ways. On the one hand, they want to say how incredible a Canadian David Johnston is. On the other, they have no problem saying he needs to step aside and get out of the way, because he is not producing the results they want.

I found it very interesting that the House leader of the NDP went to great lengths to specifically talk about how much respect he has for David Johnston. He even went on to say that he knew, as a mat-

ter of fact, that if David Johnston were asked by this House to step down through this vote, he would comply with that.

What if he did not comply with it? Would that mean the NDP would lose faith in and respect for David Johnston? Is that the case? Would the NDP members say they still respect this individual and the contributions he makes? I would like to hear this from my NDP colleague: What would his position be with respect to his feelings about the great integrity of David Johnston if he did not heed the ask of this Parliament?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, because we are the adults in the room, I will not pass a partisan comment about the Liberal government not respecting votes in the House of Commons. I do not think that would be appropriate.

The question the member is asking is what the Right Hon. David Johnston has said about himself. I will refer to his report because it is very clear to me that many Liberals in the House have not read it. As the debate continues, I suggest that they should actually read the report. At page 4, lines 19 to 20, he says, “there would be a clear overlap with the work I have already started doing”. He is referencing a public inquiry. He is saying that the reason we cannot have a public inquiry is because of that overlap.

I believe that if he has sent that signal to us, he will do the honourable thing and heed a vote in this House. How will this vote go? I do not know, and neither does the member. If a majority of members of this House voted to ask him to step down, I believe he would do so.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his speech. I also commend the NDP for moving this motion. I think it is very courageous and timely, because the issue is extremely important. What is at stake is democracy and the confidence that Quebecers and Canadians have in democracy and the functioning of their Parliament.

There are several items in this motion, but the most important item for me is the one calling on the Right Hon. David Johnston to step aside and calling on the government to urgently establish a public inquiry. That is what the opposition parties are asking for. I cannot speak for the Conservatives, but the Bloc Québécois will most certainly support this NDP motion.

This is a very important motion to which the NDP is also attaching great importance. Will the NDP tell the government that this motion is the condition for its continued support for this government? Is it important enough for the NDP to stick its neck out and tell the government that enough is enough, that its confidence in the government, in their deal and in their alliance will be decided by the vote on this motion?

Business of Supply

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Drummond, but a bit less so for the Bloc Québécois strategy of calling into question in a very personal way the Right Hon. David Johnston. Furthermore, the leader of the Bloc refuses to review all the information available. Only the member for Burnaby South is following up. The Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party are refusing to look at the vital information.

We have already talked about what happens next. I mentioned it in my speech and I will repeat it. I will ask my colleague from Drummond, who I greatly respect, to read the motion. It will be easier for the New Democrats to answer questions, if the questions have not been answered in the motion.

In the motion, we “instruct [it is a mandatory instruction] the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to provide a report to the House as soon as possible with a recommendation on who could lead...a commission of inquiry [on foreign interference] and what its terms of reference should include.”

What comes next is already in the motion. I am asking all my colleagues to carefully read it before asking questions, or making comments or speeches in the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my NDP colleague is saying all the right things. He sounds very strong. However, this motion is non-binding. This would not force the government to act, just like the March 23 motion calling for a public inquiry that the member proudly referenced. That was also non-binding. This makes me wonder if this is all simply performative, in part, because there seem to be a remarkable number of inconsistencies between the NDP's and the Liberal Party's talking points in criticizing other opposition parties. This leads to my question.

There is only one opposition party in this House that actually has the power to compel the government to act through the confidence and supply agreement between them and to turn the member's really strong, fine words into real action. Will the NDP do that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, again, I will say it for the third time: I do not want to repeat myself too much, but please read the motion. It is very clear. This would be binding when they instruct the committee. The motion states:

(b) instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to provide a report to the House as soon as possible with a recommendation on who could lead such a commission of inquiry and what its terms of reference should include.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, with your learned experience as Deputy Speaker of the House, that would be binding on the committee. The committee cannot say it is not going to do that. The committee members cannot say they are not going to follow this instruction. This would be a binding obligation on the procedure and House affairs committee, and so it would be bound by that and obliged to do that.

There is the question of whether the Right Hon. David Johnston would be obliged to resign if Parliament asked him to. Is there a binding obligation on him? I think there is a moral obligation. I have followed his career; I have seen him work with both Conservative and Liberal governments. I believe he is a man of integrity,

and if the House of Commons makes the decision in the coming hours to ask him to step down, I believe he will. In that sense, I believe there is a binding moral obligation that would follow the vote on this motion in the House.

• (1320)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again, I would really like to hear from my hon. colleague, who brings a great deal of information and wealth of knowledge to this debate, about doing that work.

The NDP has clearly put forward a path here. As my colleague has mentioned, it is consistent with being the adults in the room, being committed to doing the work and ensuring that a path is laid out and that there is a plan. As a result, Canadians will know that the will of Parliament is being followed here, as the government has unfortunately not done, and that we are the ones putting forward the plan and laying out the procedure.

The is much like the leader, the member for Burnaby South, has done in terms of demanding a briefing, taking that briefing and then going forward with a plan if needed. Again, this is unlike what the Leader of the Opposition has done. What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for her leadership on this. The NDP members have been the “adults in the room” pushing this along. We have seen the Liberals try to cover everything up and the Conservatives being petulant and juvenile. The NDP has been the one party bringing forward concerns of Canadians, as I know her constituents in London—Fanshawe have expressed to her, to get to the bottom of this and to get answers. Whenever our next election is held, we need to make sure that we have fully examined this issue and put in all the measures that protect our elections. The NDP will get us there.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, where to start on the issue? It is not that often that I have a few pieces of paper in front of me because there is just so much that I would like to say. I recognize that I have a very limited amount of time.

We all had a constituency week just last week. There were a number of ministers; Minister Joly came. We talked about the Philippines. I am sorry—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I just cannot believe that the member does not know the rules of the House. Perhaps he would like to rephrase the last name that he used.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member was ready to retract that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary was really quick to admonish the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

The hon. member has the floor.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if there were a way to wipe all that out and just start fresh, that would probably work best.

When one starts talking with Canadians to try to understand what they want us to be talking about here in Ottawa, we find that we get caught in the Ottawa bubble at times. Just last week, we had a constituency week. During the constituency week, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stopped by Winnipeg. She met with a wonderful group of people and visited a couple of businesses. The Minister of Seniors also stopped by and made a wonderful announcement about the New Horizons for Seniors program. I tried pickleball for the very first time with the Minister of Seniors, which went pretty well. Then there were a couple of other announcements, and I met with a lot of constituents.

In fact, the Prime Minister was in Winnipeg just last week and had an open public town hall. Hundreds of Winnipeggers, and I suspect others from outside Winnipeg, attended it. Whether it is from any of the events I listed or from my annual visit at the local McDonald's, I can tell members that not one person raised this issue that seems to be so deeply engaged in what I classify as the Ottawa bubble.

It makes me reflect on the fact that the Prime Minister often tells us how we want to ensure that our constituents' ideas, thoughts and concerns are being brought from our constituencies to Ottawa and not vice versa. This is what we are hearing a lot about, and we need to put this into a real-time reality check. What are we talking about here? When we stop and think about it, we are talking about foreign interference.

Opposition parties have already made their decision; they want to spend millions of dollars to have a public inquiry. What we need to do is look at how this issue has evolved. In the first place, we need to recognize that this is really not something new. Prime Minister Stephen Harper had the issue of foreign interference brought up to him and his government many years ago. He chose to do nothing, which is fine. It is the government's prerogative, I guess.

The current leader of the Conservative Party of Canada today also chose to do nothing. We need to remember that he was the minister responsible for democratic reform at the time of those allegations. He chose to do nothing.

We fast-forward to today, when he now chooses to be ignorant of the facts. Remember, the reality is that we have a special rapporteur, who comes by and makes his report. In his report, he does not recommend a public inquiry, for a wide variety of reasons. He sets in place a special annex, and in order to be able to look over that part of the report, one needs a certain security clearance. He has invited the leader of the Conservative Party to read it, but the leader of the Conservative Party says, "No, no, I don't want to do that." He comes up with some lame explanation. The reality is that he does not want to know the truth behind the report.

It is the same thing for the Bloc party. I will give the NDP credit in the sense that its leader recognizes that there is nothing wrong with being more informed on the issue of foreign interference. I give him full credit for that. He is doing this as opposed to blindly saying things and politicizing the issue, which is what we have been hearing from the Conservative Party for weeks now. Its mem-

bers are more concerned about ratcheting up the political interference issue. They are doing this to such a degree that, I would ultimately argue, they are almost doing what foreign interference is meant to do. This is to try to instill a lack of public confidence in our democratic system.

• (1325)

They go out of their way on social media to get their constituents upset about an issue that has been there for over 10 years. Imagine, we have the leader of the Conservative Party tweeting out all these horrors of foreign interference, but while he was the minister of democratic reform, those horrors were taking place and he chose to do absolutely nothing. That seems to be a double standard.

What we are seeing from the Conservative Party is not what is in the best interests of Canadians, our democracy or our institutions. It is what the leader believes is in the political best interest of the Conservative Party of Canada. That is what we are witnessing. Just because there is united opposition on an idea does not make it right. Even a minority of one can be correct.

Who is the special rapporteur? He is the former governor general of Canada, a Stephen Harper appointment and someone who has actually done thorough investigations in the past. Members can read what Stephen Harper had to say about the Hon. David Johnston at the time of the appointment. He was outstanding and unquestionable in terms of his integrity and "a great Canadian". Members can also look at the investigations Mr. Johnston conducted previously.

If members think that Mr. Harper was wonderful in his praise and recognition of the integrity of David Johnston, they can take a look at what the former senior NDP member David Christopherson from Hamilton had to say. I do not have the actual quote, but I heard it earlier today. If members think that Stephen Harper was kind, generous and truth-telling in describing the Hon. David Johnston, they should read what David Christopherson had to say, a former senior New Democratic member of Parliament who was universally well respected by all political parties. He gave him glowing marks. How could one possibly question his integrity?

However, because we have opposition parties prepared to politicize this issue to the nth degree, I would suggest they are prepared to throw a great Canadian under the bus so they can score cheap political points. I do not say that lightly. It is not like this issue surfaced three or four years ago. This issue has been there for many years.

The procedure and House affairs committee had the opportunity to investigate the issue. How many motions did we receive three years ago from the Conservative Party or any other political party at PROC suggesting that we look into foreign interference? It was there and it was real, but it was none.

Standing committees have wonderful opportunities. They can travel the country to investigate and can call all forms of witnesses before them. They can do that to come up with recommendations and policies and provide guidance to the government, political parties and their leadership circles. However, that did not take place.

Business of Supply

One of the first actions we took as a government with this Prime Minister was establishing the parliamentary security committee, which is a committee of the House of Commons with all-party participation that has top secret clearance. Its members have the highest security clearance one can have, and they have looked into this issue. I suspect they are looking into the issue even more, and there are other agencies doing so. By the way, this is a committee that the Prime Minister put into place.

● (1330)

The parliamentary secretary for electoral reform listed off about six or seven items that this government has acted on since we became government. This is a government that has taken action on foreign interference, unlike Stephen Harper and the current leader of the Conservative Party when he was minister of democratic reform, who did absolutely nothing on the issue. This government has actually taken action on the issue.

What the Conservatives do is everything they can think of. This is why I posed a question to my friends in the Bloc. Before the Prime Minister was the prime minister, we sat with third party status in the far corner. If we read the S.O. 31s from that time, we will see that they were about personal attacks on the then leader of the Liberal Party. Nothing has changed. Even after we became government and the leader of the Liberal Party became the Prime Minister of Canada, every opportunity they have had, whether it was justified or not, they have attached the word “scandal” so that social media lights up, with the plug-in being from the Conservative Party of Canada.

They are on the track of doing the best they can with character assassination, not subject matter. It is not about the issues of the day. The issues of the day, I would suggest, are inflation, housing, immigration and health care. These are the issues that Canadians are talking about if we listen to what constituents are saying. However, that is not what is happening in the Ottawa bubble, because the Conservative Party wants to continue to push an issue that it took absolutely no action on when it had the opportunity to do so, contrary to what this government has done.

We talk about the foreign registry. The Conservative Party clicks its heels and says to make it happen and then asks why it is not happening today. We are moving in that direction. There is the word “consultations”. They need to take place. The Conservatives know there is an obligation on the government to work with other stakeholders. They know that, but they seem to believe that all one needs to do is wave a magical wand around and, poof, we now have a foreign registry and everyone has to register.

It is completely incredible the way the Conservative Party is so focused on not what is in the public's best interest but what is in the best interests of the Conservative Party of Canada. That is unfortunate.

Take a look at some of the numbers. CSIS provided a report, and I would like to quote from that report. This is actually their annual report of 2022. It is apolitical, unless they are now going to accuse our law enforcement agencies of being political:

In an increasingly dangerous and polarized world, Canada faces multiple threats to our security, sovereignty, national interests, and values. CSIS is committed to keeping Canada and Canadians safe from all threats to our national security.

In doing so, CSIS investigates activities that fall within the definition of threats to the security of Canada, as outlined in the CSIS Act. Specifically, CSIS is authorized to investigate espionage and sabotage, foreign interference—

Let us underline those two words, “foreign interference”.

—terrorism and extremism, and subversion. Importantly, CSIS is prohibited from investigating lawful advocacy, protest or dissent—except when it is carried out in conjunction with activities that constitute a threat to the security of Canada.

I said to underline the words “foreign interference”. Let me go on to the next paragraph. There is something really important here: “In undertaking its work, CSIS reports on these threats by providing advice to the Government of Canada, including through the production of intelligence assessments and reports.” Here is the next part, which I want to underline: “In 2022, CSIS produced over 2,500 intelligence [reports].” It is a busy agency.

● (1335)

When we think about those reports, we hear about two or three members of Parliament. It is a lot larger than that. They provided federal briefings to 49 members of Parliament. I do not know if that means we are going to have another 47 matters of privilege being raised. I suspect that those briefings are taking place. Maybe what we should do is have PROC look into the matter. However, the Conservatives do not want anything unless it can be publicized with the word “scandal” attached to it so that they can fundraise off of it. Shame on them.

It is not only members of Parliament. There are 26 others provincially. I am assuming they are talking about parliamentarians, or MLAs in the province of Manitoba. They also note 17 municipally elected officials, who could be, I suspect, anyone from a mayor to a councillor to a reeve. There is no denying that there is a serious issue. The Prime Minister himself has said that an attack on one is an attack on all of us, but it is about the manner in which we choose to deal with the issue.

When I posed a question to a Bloc member, he said we could have had more detail; we need more detail. Bloc members need to realize, like the Conservative Party, that their very own leader does not want the details. The Bloc has already agreed that it wants a public inquiry. There has been no difference between the Conservatives and the Bloc. They have wanted a public inquiry right from the very beginning. Where was the Bloc when Stephen Harper saw this? Why did the Bloc not argue for a public inquiry when Stephen Harper was the prime minister and the current leader of the Conservative Party was the minister of democratic reform? Where was the Bloc then? It did not have a very strong footprint here, that is true, but I can tell members one thing: Even with that little footprint it was nowhere to be found.

Today, what is the difference between the Bloc and the Conservatives?

An hon. member: The shade of blue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is the shade of blue, as my colleague says. That is really about it in many different ways. Yes, one could—

Business of Supply

• (1340)

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I am worried about people in the stands who are having to hold their ears. Could the member keep it down so that it is at a more respectful level?

The Deputy Speaker: That was not a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, I cannot believe that my NDP colleague is trying to silence the member when he is representing his constituents and properly debating in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe this is giving the hon. member an opportunity to catch his breath.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I am in no way attempting to silence the hon. member. It is just that it is Tuesday and my head does hurt. He could give me some Aspirin. I am just asking him to consider the rest of us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect my friend has not dealt with his alcohol problem and maybe that is the reason why—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment. I suspect he does not have an alcohol problem.

At the end of the day, we need to recognize—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where anyone mentioned an alcohol problem, so if he is going to maintain a level of debate, he should keep his stick on the ice.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Once again I will ask everyone to take a deep breath.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the same principle of the statement the member just made should have been put to himself, looking in a mirror, prior to him standing up on the first point of order. I can assure this House that the tone of my voice is at times not quite as loud as that of the member who made the point of order.

Getting back to the issue at hand, at the end of the day, this is an issue of a government that has in many different ways taken tangible actions to ensure that the integrity of our system is in place and protected. As the parliamentary secretary clearly indicated to the House in a very detailed way, the government has taken a number of steps. Those steps, I believe, are somewhere in the neighbourhood of seven or eight tangible things that have made a difference. There are opportunities for us to deal with this issue.

The issue for me is whether the Conservatives and the Bloc in particular are going to want to continue to use this as a political tool. Are they prepared to put the politics aside and deal with this

based on what is in the best interests of Canadians as opposed to those of their respective political parties? To me, that is the real question, because if they really want to get down to business, there are all sorts of ways we can do that in a co-operative way. Something we have consistently been saying from the beginning is that for an issue of this nature, an attack on one is an attack on all. We will continue to do our best to ensure that any sort of foreign interference is minimized.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned putting politics aside, but he did not mention that the Liberal Party has benefited to a great extent from the Communist Chinese government's involvement in our democracy. It is a very serious situation. I hear Liberal members laughing, but this is no laughing matter whatsoever. We have Chinese Canadians who are being intimidated.

Will the member not admit that the special rapporteur should have pulled himself out in the first place and not accepted this job, considering his special connection with the Prime Minister and his involvement in the Trudeau Foundation? Would the member please respond?

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like there is still a sense of soreness on the other side that they did not win in the last election, so now they are trying to come up with excuses or any sort of rationale that they can blame, as opposed to it being their platform or other issues related to the Conservative Party. I will provide a quote from an article for the member, just so that he is aware. It says, “The U.S. Ambassador to Canada says the question of whether or not foreign election interference is happening is less important than whether it’s been successful, and he hasn’t seen any proof that alleged interference attempts by China in Canada’s elections have managed to affect the results.”

I know the member thinks very highly of the American counterparts. Maybe he would recognize that at least this particular individual is right. Maybe that would give the member a little more sense of comfort in recognizing that the Conservatives were not defeated because of foreign interference, but because of the campaign period itself.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House since 10 o'clock this morning, and all I am hearing is what could be described as “mud-slinging”. To put it another way, it is like a ping-pong match, but things are getting a bit out of hand. I would like to bring a little decorum back to the debate.

That being said, in his speech, the parliamentary secretary spoke at length about Mr. Johnston. This is not about Mr. Johnston and his values. It is about democracy. Even the Chinese diaspora is calling for an independent public commission of inquiry. This would undoubtedly confirm for the government that what the Canadian Security Intelligence Service knows may only be the tip of the iceberg. It would reveal and teach us even more, and would therefore be even more democratic.

Business of Supply

This is not about using the inquiry as a political tool, but rather ensuring that it serves democracy. I have a question about democracy. If this NDP motion is adopted, the House will have adopted three motions calling for an independent public inquiry. Will the government finally agree to launch an independent public inquiry this time?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that the special rapporteur, David Johnston, comes out with the report. A part of the report is an annex. That annex explains and provides justification for the report for not having a public inquiry.

It is really important for Canadians to understand that the Leader of the Conservative Party and the Leader of the Bloc Québécois have made the decision that they do not want to hear the facts on the issue. They do not want to know why the former governor general came to the conclusion that a public inquiry was not warranted. I would suggest that Canadians from coast to coast to coast should be asking the question of why it is that the Conservative and Bloc leaders do not want to know the facts. It seems to me it is because they are more interested in the politics than they are in the facts, and that is somewhat unfortunate.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North has had a track record, since this issue has come up, of minimizing it. Today we hear him competing on who has been worse on foreign interference, the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party. I think they are in clear competition. That was followed up by what I just heard, which was an award-winning mansplaining to the Bloc member.

The NDP is offering solutions. We are offering solutions. We are the party that put forward the idea to begin with for the need for an independent public inquiry. Today we are putting forward a motion about the appointment of David Johnston and questions around that appointment.

Is the member going to take this seriously? Is he going to take the will of Parliament seriously, and should the will of Parliament decide that David Johnston should exit his post, would he really respect democracy and respect the will of Parliament?

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, Thomas Mulcair was the leader of the official opposition in the House when Stephen Harper was prime minister. The member can correct me if I am wrong, but I do not believe that Thomas Mulcair ever raised the issue, even though we know foreign interference was taking place then.

The Conservative Party has seen the political optics for calling for a public inquiry and tying it to some sort of scandal. The Bloc has bought into it, but hopefully the NDP will not buy into it because, as the member knows, even when Thomas Mulcair, the leader of the NDP, sat in opposition, he never raised the issue of foreign interference, even though it was happening then. Today we have a government that has taken numerous actions to deal with foreign interference. It seems to me today that the opposition is more prepared to deal with the partisan politics of the issue as opposed to dealing with what is in the best interests of Canadians, including protecting our democratic institutions.

If opposition members were concerned about that in the first place and felt a public inquiry was necessary, why would they not have argued it when it was happening years ago? Why did they not raise the issue years ago? I would suggest it is because there is a new, shiny leader of the Conservative Party who has determined that this could be a good political issue. Other opposition members are buying into it or do not want to be seen as being soft on the issue, when there are other ways this issue could be dealt with that would minimize foreign interference. That is what I would recommend members to look at doing.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not usually one to correct the member for Winnipeg North, but he did say that members of the Conservative Party were mad that they lost the last election. I would like to correct him. They lost the last three elections, to be truthful.

The member also mentioned that this was first highlighted when Stephen Harper was prime minister and led the government, and there was nothing really done. The Conservatives were informed of foreign interference and did nothing.

Could the member highlight why he thinks it was the case that they did nothing and did the opposition at the time demand a public inquiry?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the correction. The member is correct that the Conservatives did lose three consecutive elections.

However, it is a bit dangerous to ask me to put myself in the minds of Stephen Harper and the current leader of the Conservative Party as to why they chose not to call a public inquiry. Back then, I would not have supported it, and I have serious doubts about it today and do not support it. When dealing with international foreign interference, there is a better way of doing it. I believe that, if we are prepared to put party politics to the side and start dealing with issues that Canadians and constituents want us to debate in the House of Commons, everyone would be better off for it.

It is not an issue of avoiding the topic. As I say, this topic has been around for 10 years. If we listen to experts, we will find that it will continue to be around, and that is one of the reasons why it is worth us taking a look at it, and why we have committees that are looking into it. It is to ensure that we can minimize foreign interference. In no way is it acceptable to any parliamentarian, no matter where they sit in the House.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying I will be splitting my time with the member for Burnaby South.

Let me start by going back to what I think is important. What we have before us today is a motion that sets a way forward for dealing effectively with the real problem of foreign interference in our democracy. Let us go back to what that motion actually says because most of the debate has said nothing about that.

The first thing it does is call on the right hon. David Johnston to step aside from his role as special rapporteur. Having issued his interim report, he says that he intends to keep working, but even in that report he says that the fact that he is there is an obstacle to a public inquiry.

Statements by Members

Very clearly, I think Parliament will end up calling on him to step aside to make way for the public inquiry New Democrats have been talking about now for weeks. We were the first ones to put forward a motion at PROC, and the first ones to put forward a motion in this House, calling for a full public inquiry.

What is different about the motion this time is that we have specified in the motion that we should have all-party agreement on who should lead that public inquiry so that we maintain the public confidence that, for whatever reasons, the right hon. David Johnston has lost as the special rapporteur. Let us get all-party agreement working through PROC on the person, and let us get all parties working through PROC, the committee of Parliament, on the mandate to review foreign interference from all states, not just China. The last part is, of course, that this report come back before the next election.

That is what it is. It is a clear plan for how we proceed from today, something that I expect we will be voting on tomorrow. We will see where that leads us. This is a difficult problem for Canada because we are an immigrant nation with large diaspora populations from many countries around the world, and inevitably those people keep close relationships, not just with their families but also with their culture and their countries of origin. Many maintain dual citizenship. Obviously, there will be those close relationships, and they are not inappropriate in and of themselves. People want to maintain their culture and their contacts, and many governments promote building those relationships.

What becomes a problem is when that relationship building crosses a line into interference in our democracy. We have clear evidence that that interference has taken place, as I said, not just by China but also by India, Iran and many others. What we need here is a study that shows us both the scope of the problem and how we could effectively respond to it. I do not believe there is any way to get that without the public inquiry.

There is a separate interference concern that I have always held, which is not subject to this motion and not subject to the special rapporteur, and that is the concern about interference of private interests from abroad in Canadian democracy. We had a very serious example of that having taken place with U.S. dollars supporting the convoy that was parked outside the House of Commons, which was calling for the overthrow of the Canadian government. There were more than 51,000 donors, documented, from the United States, giving several million dollars to that attempt to interfere with our democracy. That, unfortunately, is not covered. What we are talking about here is state interference in our democracy, which is a serious problem.

Unfortunately, the report from David Johnston only muddied the waters. From the beginning, this respected Canadian was put in an impossible situation. His report leaves many questions unanswered, including who changed key briefing documents for the Prime Minister, and it leaves some unasked. How could we get a report without even talking to Elections Canada about what happened?

The waters have been further muddied by the refusal of the Conservative and Bloc leaders to accept a briefing on foreign interference, as though this would somehow silence them, yet we have heard very eloquently today from the member for Durham, the

member for Vancouver East and the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, all of whom have received confidential briefings, yet were able to speak very clearly on the important issue of foreign interference after those briefings.

The last thing I want to say is that I have difficulty understanding the arguments of the Conservatives and the Bloc that the NDP needs to bring the government down over this issue. If we were to bring the government down over this issue, we would go to an election where we have done nothing about foreign interference, where we do not know how big it is or how to respond to it. This motion we have proposed today clearly specifies a public inquiry should report back before the next election, so we would have a chance to counter that foreign interference and not go directly into another election with the same problems that we have seen before.

● (1355)

I hope to see all parties support this motion, but frankly, I do not expect to see the government support it. It has been stonewalling the public inquiry from the beginning.

Where will we be after Parliament votes? I hope this will pass. I hope the special rapporteur will then step aside. The government should then realize there is no point in further stonewalling a public inquiry and will then work with the other parties to get that public inquiry going as soon as possible.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

GUELPH LITERACY LEADER

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am rising to recognize Steven Kraft, the CEO of the Guelph Public Library. Steven has been a leader in the library field for over 40 years, starting in the Guelph Public Library as the children's librarian in 1983.

With a passion for our community and for engaging in and understanding the positive benefit of libraries and what they do for us, he has been a leader in Guelph, in our community and in the library community, driving the library toward new heights of excellence. Through his leadership, he has improved programming, collections and facilities. He has spearheaded the development of new initiatives to support literacy, STEM education and social justice, working collaboratively with many community partners.

I thank Steven for his community service, his passion for public libraries and his role in equality, social and civic engagement and the promotion of literacy in Canada.

*Statements by Members***CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my mom's birthday this week. Hers is the story of so many Canadians. Her family saw Canada with little more than the clothes on their back because Canada was the land of hope and opportunity, where, if they worked hard, played by the rules and dreamed big, they could succeed. That was the deal. In turn, my parents gave me and my brothers a middle-class upbringing in small-town southern Ontario. Using common sense and dreaming big, that was all possible.

However, the deal is now broken. I hear this frustration every single day from new Canadians and young people. After eight years of the Liberals, housing is out of reach and the cost of living is crushing. I hear the exasperation in people's voices and I see the tears in their eyes.

That is why common-sense Conservatives and our leader are working so hard to turn hurt into hope. We will bring home bigger paycheques, scrap the punishing carbon taxes and bring down the cost of living, so we can dream big in Canada again. Let us bring it home.

* * *

TREE PLANTING AT PINHEY'S POINT

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this spring, volunteers from across my riding are setting out to plant 10,000 trees at Pinhey's Point, thanks to investments made by our government and the City of Ottawa. These trees will transform over four hectares of land into an amazing forest, providing residents with new trails and trees to explore and appreciate. As we know, these new trees will help combat climate change by removing carbon dioxide from our atmosphere.

This investment was made possible by our pledge to plant two billion trees across our country, an ambitious goal that is both combatting climate change and improving the quality of life for people in my riding. I cannot wait to watch these trees grow to become a lush forest. I look forward to the many hikes I will have in the years to come.

* * *

[Translation]

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTRE MGR MARCOUX

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Centre Mgr Marcoux in Limoulu is celebrating its 60th anniversary. It is often said that with age comes wisdom. However, it did not take the Mgr Marcoux Centre 60 years to become wise and caring.

The centre is a pillar of our community. It welcomes tens of thousands of people every year. They come to take French classes, play tennis, take swimming lessons, cook together and so on.

They go there because it is a welcoming environment. It truly teaches people how to live together better; it is a centre where everyone can find solace and friendship without ever being judged and always being welcomed with open arms.

I tip my hat to the Centre Mgr Marcoux for 60 wonderful years of heartfelt support and hard work. Congratulations to the teams who have worked there in the past and those who work there now. I wish the Centre Mgr Marcoux continued success.

* * *

[English]

SENIORS MONTH

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as June marks Seniors Month, I was delighted to start visiting seniors' residences in my community of Orléans last week. After a few years without being able to meet with our seniors, it was so nice to sit down, hear their stories and simply enjoy their company. I have to say it was a joy to see the smiles on their faces. The resilience and strength exhibited by the residents was truly inspiring.

● (1405)

[Translation]

It was also an opportunity to join the Dumoulin family at Portobello Manor to mark Germaine Dumoulin's 100th birthday. I also want to thank all the staff for their warm welcome and dedication to seniors. I finished my week at Club 60 Orléans to celebrate the 50th and 60th wedding anniversaries of some of its members.

Congratulations and thank you.

* * *

[English]

LORAN SCHOLAR

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House of Commons and recognize a promising, young student from my constituency. Cadena Brazeau is one of only two Manitobans to receive the prestigious Loran scholarship award worth \$100,000, which is the largest undergraduate scholarship in Canada.

The 17-year-old student from Keeseekoowenin First Nation has been actively involved in improving her community for many years. She started her community's first youth centre so local children could socialize together and have a safe environment. Cadena plans to further her education and pursue a career by studying law at the University of Calgary.

On behalf of all members in the House of Commons, I would like to sincerely congratulate Cadena on winning this remarkable award. I wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

* * *

SCARBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the fourth largest shopping mall in Canada is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Since opening in 1973, the Scarborough Town Centre has served as an integral hub for the people of Scarborough. Home of the Scarborough Walk of Fame, the shopping centre offers over 250 stores with diverse products and services. It is truly a welcoming space for all Canadians and residents of Scarborough, including myself.

As a high school student, I was a part of the Scarborough Youth Council, which met regularly at the Scarborough Youth Resource Centre located in the mall. To this day, Scarborough residents know very well that a visit to the Scarborough Town Centre will likely mean running into a neighbour, a colleague or a friend.

I congratulate the mall management, businesses and organizations on an incredible 50 years, and I wish them many more years of growth and success.

* * *

IRAN

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to show my support for the people of Iran and strongly condemn the new wave of executions there.

There are troubling reports of over 100 executions in the month of May alone. Among those are three young Iranians: Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi and Saeed Yaghoubi. They were detained in the protests and uprising against the regime in November 2022. The cries of the parents of these three young protesters, pleading to save their lives, are resonating in our collective conscience and demand us to do more.

Canada and its allies in the international community can no longer stay silent. The uprising of the Iranian people in the past eight months and the deadly crackdown of protesters by the regime is yet another indication that we must unequivocally support the people of Iran.

Canadians across the country continue to support the families that deserve true justice, and we pray for all those affected.

* * *

UNITED CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF ALBERTA

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta have spoken and a new day has dawned. Congratulations to Premier Danielle Smith and the United Conservative Party for forming the majority government that Albertans not only want, but need.

Many tried to stop them, including members of the media, certain pollsters, a former mayor and even two NDP members in this very House. Thankfully, Albertans rejected them.

Albertans can now look forward to prosperity and stability. They know a strong economy builds hospitals and highways. They know a strong economy pays teachers and nurses. They know a strong economy provides good jobs, which allow people to feed their families. It will not stop there.

Canadians are waking up to the cost of irresponsible NDP and Liberal governments. They are recognizing that the common sense of the common people will prevail, not only in Alberta but across the nation.

Statements by Members

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence and the entire defence team are continuing to build a Canadian Armed Forces where every member feels protected, respected and empowered to serve.

The world is taking notice. During my recent visit to Norway, I met with leaders to discuss the strengthening of Arctic nation relations. During our conversations, I learned that the Norwegian Armed Forces are looking to Canada as a model in getting comprehensive culture change across the line.

In December, the minister accepted all 48 recommendations set out in the independent external comprehensive review. Since then, we have expanded the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre's reach and services, nominated Madame Therrien as external monitor, launched the first phase of the independent legal assistance program and more.

Our top priority is to create a meaningful culture change in the Canadian Armed Forces. Culture change is not just morally right, it is operationally necessary.

* * *

● (1410)

SENIORS

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim they have lifted 1.3 million Canadians out of poverty, but this is not supported by the data. According to a national food rescue organization, 60% more Canadians per month are expected to use the food banks than last year. They are anticipating serving over eight million Canadians this year. Over 732,000 of those will be seniors.

The ability of seniors to feed themselves has been impacted by the rising inflation rate brought on by the carbon tax, and now the Liberals are burdening us with a second carbon tax. However, the Minister of Seniors claims their priority is to support those most vulnerable, especially seniors. The seniors in my riding of King—Vaughan do not feel supported by this government; they feel betrayed.

Seniors nurtured us. Seniors built this country. Seniors deserve better. Our Conservative leader will axe these taxes and restore dignity to our seniors.

*Statements by Members***WILDFIRES IN NOVA SCOTIA**

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Upper Hammonds Plains and Upper Tantallon have been rocked by ongoing wildfires, which have impacted thousands of residents of Halifax West. I would like to thank all the first responders and firefighters who have been battling the blaze. My heart goes out to the families who have lost homes, and to those evacuated. I have spoken with so many who have been affected. I am grateful that there have been no reports of fatalities.

Special thanks go to those who have come together to support evacuees, opening up their homes and their hearts. Evacuation centres, like the Canada Games Centre, have received donations of clothes, diapers, toys and food, so much so that they have asked people to slow down. I thank the Red Cross and the many community groups, legions, churches, restaurants, hotels, pet boarding spaces, Facebook groups and all those who have stepped up.

I want to let residents know that the federal government is ready to support the ongoing response.

Our community is strong and resilient, and my heart is with everyone there.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week is National AccessAbility Week, with the theme “From Possibilities to Practice”. What a great week this is to ratify the Canada disability benefit act and move it from possibility to practice.

The NDP sees the importance of giving royal assent to this bill right away. For almost one million people with a disability living in poverty, there is no time to waste. The government must act immediately so this benefit can move forward and get out to the people who need it. Canadians living with a disability must not be made to wait any longer to finally receive the dignity and the financial supports that uphold their human rights.

* * *

[Translation]

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAINT-JÉRÔME FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year, Saint-Jérôme is celebrating its fire department's 150th anniversary. In 1873, Saint-Jérôme relied on volunteer firefighters. At that time, there was no water infrastructure so horse-drawn fire pumps were used.

In 1885, Saint-Jérôme built its first fire station, which is still standing in downtown Saint-Jérôme and was in service until 1989.

When the fire brigade was first formed, it was led by Mayor Godefroy Laviolette and his municipal clerk, Louis Labelle, who were replaced the following year by Captain Stanislas Deschambault and his lieutenant Charles Morandville. In 150 years, it grew from 15 men to over 60 men and women firefighters, who are today led by the fire department's director, Patrice Brunelle.

Our firefighters needed to be dedicated and courageous to work for just \$1 a fire, which is what they earned in 1873. I would also be remiss if I failed to mention the great loss our community suffered on March 27, 1984, with the death of firefighter Jean-Charles Alarie.

I thank the firefighters of yesterday and today, and wish them a happy 150th anniversary.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP talks a big game when it comes to the Liberal government. He loves to criticize the Liberals on Twitter, but in the House, he supports the Liberals every time. The motion today is a good example.

Conservatives have been calling for an independent public inquiry for months. All the while, the NDP has supported the Liberal's fake rapporteur. Now, all of a sudden, NDP members are making it look like they support our idea of a public inquiry. However, we know that, when push comes to shove, they will protect their Liberal coalition partners and allow them to continue with their cover-up. How do I know? The House already passed a motion, months ago, asking for a public inquiry, which was supported by the NDP. However, the Liberals have ignored this request, and the NDP has done nothing.

If NDP members really want to prove that they support a public inquiry, they must tell their Liberal bosses that they will pull out of their coalition agreement if they do not call one. I challenge the NDP to do the right thing for Canadians and stand up to its Liberal masters.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last several months, Canadians have seen reports of foreign interference in our democracy by the Communist dictatorship in Beijing. What was the Prime Minister's response? He appointed a member of the Trudeau Foundation to investigate, the same Trudeau Foundation that has been the target of a foreign influence operation that saw it accept \$140,000 from the Communist dictatorship in Beijing.

The House called on the government to hold a public inquiry, but instead, the Prime Minister's ski buddy and Trudeau Foundation board member covered up for him. When that came to light, people could count on the official opposition. Could they count on the New Democrats? When the chips were down at committee, they delayed this for the government's benefit and continued to cover up the Prime Minister's inaction, to the detriment of our democracy.

Canadians deserve a public inquiry now.

* * *

SOCIAL FINANCE FUND

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to rise in the House today to share some big news for Canada. Yesterday was a watershed moment for social innovation and social finance in Canada. I was happy to join the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to announce the launch of Canada's social finance fund.

Social entrepreneurs, social innovators and social purpose organizations that are helping Canada tackle our toughest and most persistent challenges should know that we recognize their unique contributions and are investing in their success. This fund was seeded with a historic federal government investment of \$755 million, and it will be leveraged in equal part with private and philanthropic capital to support our social innovators and social entrepreneurs right across Canada.

For many years, access to capital has been limited for the entrepreneurs and innovators who are doing things differently and putting people and the planet first. We are changing all that. The social finance fund is about turning big, homegrown, innovative ideas into a reality and realizing their full—

The Speaker: Oral Questions, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one believes the Prime Minister's cottage neighbour and member of the Trudeau Foundation, David Johnston, when he tries to cover up the reality of Beijing's interference to support the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister for the past 10 years.

To enhance and restore Canadians' confidence in our democratic system, will the Prime Minister finally fire his friend from the Trudeau Foundation and launch a real public inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition claims to want to know the facts and says that a public inquiry is the only way to get to the truth, but he outright refuses to learn the truth. The intelligence services are offering him a briefing to make him aware of all the facts and the intelligence underlying this concern of foreign interference, but he refuses. He is choosing ignorance in order to be able to continue his unfounded attacks on our former governor general.

● (1420)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really all an act with this guy. What he says is "There's nothing to see here, so why don't you come into a dark room and see it, and then we will commit you to an oath of secrecy

Oral Questions

so you can walk out and tell Canadians that you can't tell them anything at all." That is, effectively, what he is saying.

We do not need more people to keep secrets; we need more people telling the truth.

Why will he not launch a public inquiry and do that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was minister of elections, perhaps that was his approach and why he did not do anything to fight foreign interference that was ongoing in our elections and has been for decades.

He chose to cover his ears and not listen to intelligence officials, and now he is not letting the facts get in the way of base partisan attacks. He is choosing to not get briefed on the actual facts of the matter, so that he can continue to attack our democracy, to attack other political parties and to attack esteemed individuals like our former governor general.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyday Canadians need the facts. They do not need just to have a prime minister keeping secrets and then have that same prime minister force other people to keep his secrets as well.

The Prime Minister said he admires the basic Chinese Communist dictatorship.

When will he realize that we live in Canada and that one cannot silence one's critics?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is entitled to his opinions; he is just not entitled to his facts. That is why we have actually directed the intelligence community to give him the clearance necessary so that he can find out all the facts, all the information necessary. He is choosing to hide behind a veil of ignorance so that he does not have to allow the facts to get in the way of a good political argument or personal attack, either on me or on the former governor general or on anyone who seems to stand in his way.

The Speaker: There is a lot of chattering going on, and I want to make sure that everyone gets to hear the questions and the answers. I am going to ask everyone, once again, to take a deep breath and listen to both sides.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he wants facts? Well, here is a fact. He would have me commit to following section 12(1) of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act, which would not only strip away my ability to speak about this matter but would also ban me from doing it right here on the floor of the House of Commons. That is a fact.

The real question is, what is he so determined to hide?

We know Beijing helped him in two elections. We know Beijing gave donations to his Trudeau Foundation. Is that why he is so determined to silence his critics and keep these secrets?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it is difficult for some people to remember, but the hon. member was, at one point, a minister of the Crown and thereby subject to oaths of secrecy and cabinet confidences, and he was able to handle secrets just fine at that point, including when he was minister of elections.

At the same time, he is choosing now to turn his back on the facts, because the facts would be inconvenient to the political argument he is trying to make right now. If that member were serious about this serious issue, he would allow the intelligence agencies to give him the necessary—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what he is saying is that nothing is hidden. I invite my colleagues to look at everything that is hidden.

After that, they will go before the media and say that they can say nothing. That would not provide any further information to Canadians, who are worried about the loss of independence of our democratic system.

Ultimately, will he stop hiding behind his friend from the Trudeau Foundation and finally launch a public inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Leader of the Opposition is demonstrating that he does not understand parliamentarians' responsibilities or the way the security system works.

For example, the parliamentarians who sit on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians see all the information and subsequently write reports that they share with Parliament about whether these processes were properly followed and whether they agree with the processes. That already exists.

He is creating reasons to remain in the dark so he can continue his attacks.

• (1425)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is starting to become quite isolated. He has few friends left except for Mr. Johnston. All the parties want an independent public inquiry. The former chief electoral officer wants an independent public inquiry. Most analysts are clamouring for an inquiry. Even Morris Rosenberg wants one, but not David Johnston.

Who will the Prime Minister listen to, his friend Rosenberg or his friend Johnston?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we asked Mr. Johnston to conduct a detailed analysis of all the facts and all the information compiled by the intelligence services in order to look into the context, to look into the work done by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and to evaluate whether a public inquiry would help restore public trust. He came to the conclusion that this would not be the best approach.

He will be holding public hearings over the summer to talk about it with Canadians. In his opinion, a public inquiry is unnecessary.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the appointment of a former member of the Trudeau Foundation, a family friend and a friend to China was not legitimate. The findings and the report have no legitimacy. Mr. Johnston's obstinacy in designating himself to continue on with this matter is wrong.

If Mr. Johnston refuses to recuse himself, as Parliament may well ask him to do, will the Prime Minister have the dignity and statesmanship to remove him from his role and create an independent commission of public inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is interesting is that the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who is concerned about legitimacy and facts, refuses to be briefed on the secret and confidential information that CSIS has compiled on the matter.

He also refuses to accept the facts, to accept reality, so he can carry on with these debates and partisan attacks in the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's approach to foreign interference has been a failure. The Prime Minister decided to bring in a special rapporteur, which was a mistake. He should have launched a public inquiry. Now the appearance of bias is so strong that the special rapporteur can no longer continue to do his work.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and remove the special rapporteur from his position and restore Canadians' confidence in our electoral system?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, David Johnston is an eminent Canadian who has served this government and this country for decades. The reality is he was appointed a number of times by former prime minister Stephen Harper to important responsibilities, including to be governor general of this country. He has undertaken this responsibility and this task of looking at foreign interference and reporting back to Canadians with the seriousness one would expect of him. It is unfortunate the opposition parties are choosing to play politics around this issue instead of actually standing up for—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows that the appearance of bias is so strong in this case that Mr. Johnston cannot continue to do his work to restore confidence in the system.

[*Translation*]

Our motion calls on the Prime Minister to remove Mr. Johnston from his role. It is clear that the allegations of foreign interference are serious.

Will the Prime Minister finally take these allegations seriously and immediately launch a public inquiry?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been taking allegations of interference and concerns about foreign interference seriously since 2015. That is why we implemented many mechanisms to counter interference. That is why we have relied on experts like Rosenberg and Johnston to follow up on what we are doing and to make recommendations on how to move forward.

We will continue to take this issue seriously. We will continue to let the facts and the intelligence gathered by our agencies guide our reflections and actions in this regard.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister appointed a member of the Liberal Trudeau Foundation, advised by a Liberal donor, to decide whether to investigate Liberal cabinet ministers and Liberal staff about what they knew and when they knew it, but, do not worry, another Liberal Trudeau Foundation cleared the conflict. That is the story in Ottawa.

Canadians say it is not good enough and Conservatives say it is not good enough. Even the NDP is making a half-attempt at appearing to say that it is not good enough. It is not good enough. It is a cover-up.

How can the government not call a public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only cover-up that is occurring right now is the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, who continues to cover his own eyes from the classified briefing that we offer him. The irony is that a member of his own Conservative caucus, the member for Durham, at least took a briefing from CSIS.

Now I say, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member: take the briefing, learn the information and do the work of fighting foreign interference together.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister will be remembered for silencing Canadians, and he will not silence this opposition.

David Johnston should not be the special rapporteur. There should not be a special rapporteur. There needs to be an independent public inquiry and it needs to happen today. The only thing that could possibly restore trust in this place is a real investigation into political interference and the only people who believe that should not happen are the Liberals.

I want to know from the minister what it will take for him to listen to Canadians being harassed by a dictatorship and listen to the members of this House who were targeted. What will it take for him to end the cover-up?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had been paying attention, she would have noted that we did a public consultation on the creation of a foreign agent registry by listening to Canadians, by working with diaspora communities to make sure that we understand their concerns around marginalization and stigmatization. The best way

forward is for the Conservative Party of Canada to take the briefing.

I have a simple question, through you, Mr. Speaker, to them. When will you take the briefing?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Beijing interfered in two federal elections and helped the Liberals win. It threatened members of Parliament of this House and their families. It donated \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation to influence the Prime Minister's decisions. These are very serious matters of foreign interference that require a full public inquiry. Unfortunately, we all knew that the fix was in when the Prime Minister appointed a member of the Trudeau Foundation, who also happens to be his neighbour and a long-time family friend, and then gave him a fake fancy title.

Why the cover-up?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been taking the work of fighting against foreign interference very seriously since 2015. Again, the contradiction is the Conservatives, who want to say they are taking this seriously, yet voted against the new authorities that we granted to our national security establishment to fight this scourge. The fact that they do not want to support taking a briefing so that they can equip themselves with the information to have a responsible, thoughtful conversation about this I think lays bare that they do not take it seriously.

Again, when will you take the briefing?

The Speaker: I kind of let it slide as members were doing it indirectly and it was kind of a grey zone, but I am going ask hon. members to ask their questions through the Speaker, not directly to members, even if they put a prefix on it.

The hon. member for Edmonton Mill Woods.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not only concerning that Canadian elected officials are being threatened, but Canadians who disagree with Beijing are also very concerned. The executive director of the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project said, "Johnston's recommendations for hearings rather than a formal inquiry was 'shockingly' disappointing." Mabel Tung, chairwoman of the Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement, said, "It gives us a feeling that we are not safe for speaking our minds as Canadians."

The government is failing Canadians with its self-serving cover-up. What is it hiding?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that we share the concerns of the diaspora community leadership, who are worried about being targeted by foreign interference. That is why we conducted a public consultation on the foreign agent registry, and that is why we think there are compelling, intelligent reasons a public hearing would put the community at the centre of these conversations, so that we can have a thoughtful way forward in the work to protect our democratic institutions and in fighting against foreign interference.

Oral Questions

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this farce has gone on long enough. With the special rapporteur's report, the Prime Minister's shenanigans to avoid launching a public inquiry have been exposed for all to see.

What is really so special about this rapporteur are his ties to the Trudeau Foundation, his reliance on Liberal donors, his status as an old friend of China and, most of all, his close friendship with the Prime Minister's family.

When will the Prime Minister end this charade, fire Mr. Johnston and launch an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what was truly exposed for all to see was the Leader of the Opposition's credibility when he refused the government's offer to grant him access to highly sensitive information.

He decided he would rather play partisan politics on an issue as critical as protecting our democratic institutions from foreign interference than get the facts so he could speak publicly and coherently based on the facts, instead of simply spouting partisan accusations.

This is what was exposed. My colleague must be a little disappointed in his leader.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, let us talk about this government's credibility.

On April 27, the Minister of Public Safety said that the RCMP had closed two of Beijing's police stations in Quebec. We then found out that the two Beijing police stations had not received any closure requests from the RCMP. We even learned that one of the police stations on the south shore of Montreal had received nearly \$200,000 from this government.

Is the Minister of Public Safety essentially the Prime Minister's misinformation puppet? Who is pulling the misinformation strings?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, the RCMP has already taken meaningful action with regard to the activities involving foreign interference and these alleged police stations. The RCMP will carry on with the tools that this government has given it.

It is the Conservatives who opposed the bill to give new tools to our national security establishment. That is a contradiction. The Conservatives need to reverse their position.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since we found out that there was Chinese interference in the election process, the government has been acting as though it is in charge of elections. It is acting as though Parliament does not have a say and democracy falls under the exclusive authority of the Prime Minister.

It is pretty crazy that the majority of parliamentarians elected by the majority of the population have less clout than an unelected rapporteur, a friend of the Prime Minister who was appointed by the Prime Minister and reports to the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister finally launch an independent public commission of inquiry, as the majority of elected members of the House are asking him to do?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were disappointed but not surprised that the leader of the Bloc Québécois refused to have access to the most important and confidential information from CSIS. That would have given him a clearer picture of the facts in the whole matter of foreign interference.

I, too, used to be an opposition member. I understand that sometimes the truth is hard for the opposition. However, this time, we made an offer to the opposition party leaders, including the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party leader. They refused to get access to this information because they prefer to play political games.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' answer to getting to the bottom of foreign interference is to ask the leaders of the opposition parties to read confidential information that they will never be able to discuss publicly. We already had a Prime Minister who refused to keep the public informed. Now, on top of that, we have opposition party leaders who would not be allowed to do so.

We need more transparency, not less. We need more transparency and less secrecy. What we need is an independent public commission of inquiry that guarantees greater transparency than a rapporteur who is neither public nor independent.

Seriously, what are they waiting for?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, public hearings are not the only way to demonstrate respect for the value of transparency.

It was our government that created the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It was our government that created the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. There are plenty of examples of how we can move forward with a national discussion to better protect our democratic institutions. Our government wants to work with all members of the House.

• (1440)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are telling us that an inquiry would not be effective because there are too many national security issues. However, they launched a commission of inquiry into Maher Arar. They tell us that they have taken concrete measures to ensure the integrity of the electoral system. Since then, at least three opposition members have been threatened. They are telling us not to be partisan, but they are not respecting the will of the majority of elected representatives. None of their arguments make sense.

Why are they refusing to call an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since forming government in 2015, we have taken the threat of foreign interference seriously.

We were the first government to put in place a suite of non-partisan measures precisely to strengthen our ability to respond to interference in our democratic institutions and also to inform parliamentarians about threats to democratic institutions and what the government is doing to counter them. I think the member will be happy if she talks to her colleagues who sit on these parliamentary committees.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many families, especially those who live in rural communities, have to drive out of necessity. They drive to school, work, medical appointments and social activities.

Families are already struggling with higher cost of living expenses. Now the Liberal government wants to add two more carbon taxes on financially stressed Canadians. Liberal carbon tax 1 would add 41¢ a litre on gas. How painful does life have to get before the Prime Minister will finally cancel the carbon tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives never want to talk about the costs of climate change.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that there was a \$20-billion impact to the Canadian economy in 2021. Six hundred fires are burning from coast to coast. They are devastating our communities, and they are threatening lives and livelihoods.

When are the Conservatives going to get serious about climate change and stop the denial?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this carbon tax costs lower-income Canadians the most. It is an unfair tax.

Carbon tax 2 is coming at a time when many Canadians are struggling just to feed themselves. Now every time a Canadian fills up their car, they will be paying an additional tax on the GST and the HST. The Prime Minister is literally putting a carbon tax on a tax.

When will the Prime Minister take his boot off the neck of Canadians and finally cancel carbon taxes 1 and 2?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have no credibility when it comes to affordability. Every time we put an affordability measure on the table, whether it is dental, rental or the Canadian child benefit, the Conservatives vote against it. The climate rebate is an affordability measure. It is going to help families be better off.

What is not going to leave families better off is investing in cryptocurrency. The Leader of the Opposition has not walked back his comments. He has not apologized. That is because he has no plan

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for the environment, no plan for the economy and certainly no plan for affordability.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals already have one carbon tax that would add 41¢ to the price of a litre of gasoline. Carbon tax 2 would add another 17¢ per litre. GST will, of course, be applied to both. This means an extra 61¢ on the price of a litre of gas.

Since Canadians cannot afford higher taxes and the existing carbon tax has not achieved emission reductions, will the Liberals cancel this new carbon tax today?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind all members of the House that climate change is real. I came to Ottawa this morning from my home province of Nova Scotia, where some of our communities are literally on fire.

There are thousands upon thousands of Nova Scotians who have been displaced from their homes, and hundreds who are risking—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt. I am starting to have a hard time hearing the answers again. I want to make sure that everyone gets to hear the voice of the person who is speaking and to hear the message as well, whether it is from the question or the answer.

I am going to ask everyone to calm down and not yell at people. Whoever said, “Shh”, I agree with them. That is a very good point.

The hon. minister can begin from the top, please.

● (1445)

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I know that it is difficult for Conservatives to accept this, but climate change is real. I came to Ottawa this morning from my home province of Nova Scotia, where our communities are literally on fire. Thousands upon thousands of families have been displaced from their homes. Hundreds are watching as their homes may be turned into ashes. Eight months ago, hurricane Fiona damaged our communities beyond measure, not only displacing homes, but also sweeping people out to sea in some instances.

The Conservatives are peddling policies that they know will increase the level of pollution that is causing these severe weather events. We have one planet. It is my home, and it is theirs. I will not stand idly by and watch it burn.

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Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number one thing that people in my community contact me about is the cost of living. High inflation, mortgage renewal increases and the carbon tax are punishing Canadians. In rural ridings like mine, there is no subway. People need to drive.

A good government makes life more affordable, and the government institutes a second carbon tax instead. Carbon tax 1 will add 41¢ a litre. Carbon tax 2 will add 17¢ and, because they are Liberals, they will tax the taxes and add GST. Is 61¢ a litre enough, or is there a third carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think most members of the House recognize the scientific reality of climate change and the need to address it, but of course we need to do so in a manner that reflects affordability. That is why we have put in place the heat pump program, the grocery rebate and others.

I must say, though, that I find the positions being taken by the Conservatives to be increasingly bizarre. First, they ran and were elected as MPs on a platform that acknowledged that pricing pollution is the most efficient way to reduce emissions, and now they repudiate their own platform. Now, they criticize the clean fuel regulations, a policy very similar to the renewable fuels regulations that were introduced in 2010 by none other than Stephen Harper.

The Conservatives should start being honest with the Canadian public. The only thing they presently do that is constant is ignore the scientific reality of climate change. They have no plan to build an economy for the future.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried about the state of our democracy. Diaspora communities have been sounding the alarm for decades on this issue of foreign interference. The government is clearly not listening to them, and the official opposition is more interested in making political points.

New Democrats are listening. We know that 72% of Canadians want a public inquiry. They need to trust our democratic institutions. Will the Prime Minister put the interests of Canadians first and call a public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are confident that Mr. Johnston has laid a path forward in holding public hearings that will put communities at the centre of a conversation on the way we can fight against foreign interference to protect our democratic institutions. It is encouraging that at least the NDP is prepared to take the briefing. It is simply up to the Conservatives now, if they are serious, to roll up their sleeves, get a seat at the table and take a briefing so we can fight foreign interference together.

The Speaker: Before going to the next question, I just want to remind the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes that he has a very strong voice and it carries very well, so if he is speaking to anyone, and I am sure he is only talking to the people around him, maybe he could just whisper to the best of his ability.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference is real. It is happening here in Canada, and the Prime Minister has failed to address it. By refusing to implement an independent public inquiry into foreign interference, the Liberals are hurting people and our democracy.

Their appointed rapporteur David Johnston does not have the confidence of the House. He must go. The Prime Minister needs to listen and do the right thing. Will he remove David Johnston and immediately launch an independent public inquiry?

● (1450)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns about the threats that are posed by foreign interference, which is why this government has been acting concretely by introducing new powers for the Communications Security Establishment by creating new mechanisms of transparency.

Most recently, I signed off on a ministerial directive to ensure that I and the Prime Minister are getting briefed. We now have a public hearings process, which we hope to start in earnest, so we can bring Canadians along as we equip our establishment with new tools, but to do so in the right way. That is something that we are all committed to doing.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the overdose and toxic drug supply crisis is having a devastating impact on Canadian communities and families of all backgrounds from all walks of life. From Fort Mac to St. John's, from downtown Montreal to my own riding of Vancouver Granville, the illegal supply laced with toxic substances is killing people. Moms Stop the Harm, a network of Canadian families impacted by substance use related harms and deaths, are on the Hill today to tell us that harm reduction saves lives. If members do not believe it, they can just ask anyone who has lost a loved one to tainted drugs. The Conservatives are proposing a false choice between treatment and harm reduction, but one needs both.

What does the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions make of the Conservatives' absurd suggestion that harm reduction measures are contributing to the overdose crisis?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver Granville for his determined advocacy on this issue. It is so important to listen to the families and loved ones with lived and living experience, such as those of Moms Stop the Harm. It is so disappointing that the Conservative Party is pursuing a campaign of fear over facts and that the leader has refused to meet with this truly important group.

Multiple experts have affirmed there is no evidence that prescribed safe supply is contributing to drug deaths. The B.C. chief coroner was clear: “There should not be a dichotomy between access to life-saving safer supply and access to life-saving treatment options.”

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Atlantic premiers have begged the government to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuels, but instead of listening, the Liberals have come up with carbon tax 2, which is going to punish Atlantic voters even more. Carbon tax 1 is a 40¢-a-litre tax on the pump price. Carbon tax 2 adds another 17¢, plus there is the 15% HST, adding another nine cents to pump prices. This makes everything we buy more expensive. Carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2 will cost Atlantic households an extra \$2,000 a year.

When will the Liberals stop punishing Atlantic Canadians and remove the carbon tax scam?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I have something in common. Both of our provinces are on fire right now. The reality is that, for eight years now in the House, every time we advanced a policy that would reduce emissions, the Conservatives voted against it. For goodness' sake, one of the members of Parliament on the Conservative side from Nova Scotia has described investments in heat pumps as fairy tales. They will not get behind anything that protects our environment.

The reality, which the member knows, is that this policy puts more money in the pockets of families than it will cost them. He would take money from his neighbours to make pollution free. That is an incredulous policy.

We will be there to make life more affordable. We will be there to protect our environment. That is the path forward.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is absolute rubbish that a carbon tax is going to control the weather or bring down natural disasters. The government is not serious about an environmental policy. It has a tax policy. It is going to cost motorists in Atlantic Canada 67¢ more to fill up their pumps because of carbon taxes 1 and 2. It is the Parliamentary Budget Officer who said the net cost to Canadian families in Atlantic Canada is over \$2,000 a month.

I will ask it again: When is the government going to do what Atlantic premiers have asked and cancel carbon tax 2 to give all Atlantic Canadians the break they deserve?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do colleagues know what is costing Atlantic Canadian families right now? It is the forest fires in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. It is the fact that there are thousands of families across this country that have had to flee their homes. Instead of putting policies on the table that would help fight climate change, they are obsessed with trying to deny it and trying to ensure that Canadians do not have the tools they need to fight climate change.

It is no wonder that the members opposite yesterday accused us of putting them on a guilt trip. They feel guilty for the fact that they are not doing anything to support Canadians in fighting climate change.

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we speak, 1.5 million Canadians are using food banks every month. As we speak, one in five families has to cut back on their food budget because they do not have enough money in their pockets. As we speak, to help Canadians, this Liberal government has decided to invent a new tax: the Liberal carbon tax 2.0. That is what the government will create, and it will cost every Quebec family an extra \$436. We are not the ones saying that, it is the PBO.

Why is the finance minister imposing another tax on Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that life is difficult these days for ordinary Canadians, for many Canadians.

That is why our government has implemented programs to help Canadians with affordability. For example, the grocery rebate will be there for Canadians on July 5. I am very pleased that we were able to come together to accomplish that. Now, we need to do the same with the other measures we have introduced to help Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is absolutely clear is that they cannot count on the Conservative Party to support a second Liberal carbon tax. There is already one excessive tax, and now they are creating another to tax Canadians even more. It will cost Canadian families an additional \$436 on average.

Those people over there are happy to see it and happy to say it. I have news for the Liberals. Could they answer a very simple question?

Are they going to add another Liberal carbon tax on top of the existing Liberal carbon tax that is already being taxed?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, but he should have listened.

We listened to Canadians, which is something those on the other side should do more often. Canadians told us three things. First, they wanted help with the cost of living. That is why the Minister of Finance proposed the grocery rebate, which will help 11 million Canadians across the country. Second, they told us that they need more health care services, and we took action. Third, they told us to invest in the economy of the future. That is exactly what we did yesterday by bringing GM to Quebec.

The Speaker: Before we move on to the next question, I would like to remind members that I can see them very well, even though they are looking in another direction when they shout.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, Commissioner Grenier tabled a report on Option Canada's illegal spending in connection with the 1995 referendum. He concluded that the "no" side had spent over half a million federal dollars illegally. The federal government refused to co-operate. This week, the National Assembly unanimously supported the release of documents from the Grenier commission. Even the Liberal Party of Quebec supported the motion, but the federal government's documents are not forthcoming.

Will the government commit today to fully co-operating with the unanimous National Assembly?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is typical Bloc Québécois. They look forward by looking back 35 years. That is how the Bloc operates. Basically, what Bloc members want is to come here and pick yet another fight, but not just with the Government of Canada. Now they want to pick a fight with Newfoundland. They are even picking fights with Québec Solidaire because it is not sovereigntist enough for them. Seriously.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not picking fights, and that is the truth. The only person I know of who is spoiling for a fight is the member for Mont-Royal when the discussion turns to official languages.

The Grenier report revealed \$500,000 in illegal spending originating with Canadian Heritage. We will never really know what went on unless Ottawa co-operates. Almost 30 years after the fact, the National Assembly unanimously believes that enough water has flowed under the bridge. All information about the referendum campaign can now be disclosed without damaging the reputations of the people involved. Quebeckers and Canadians have the right to know the truth.

Will the government agree to co-operate with a unanimous National Assembly?

• (1500)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they want the truth. The truth is that the Bloc has both feet firmly planted in the past. They have both feet stuck right in it. The Bloc is incapable of looking toward the future. They say they want to talk about the future, yet they focus on events that took place 30 years ago. In the meantime, the government is focused on our youth, our seniors and the environment.

Instead of staying stuck in the past, the Government of Canada is making those things a priority.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are doubling down on their failed scam with a second carbon tax and Canadians are paying the price.

Carbon tax 1 drove up the cost of feed, fuel and fertilizer, driving up the cost of food more than \$1,000 per family. Higher carbon taxes mean higher food bank use. Last year, more than five million families were using a food bank every month. With a higher carbon tax, the use of food banks has gone up a staggering 60%. More than eight million Canadians are using a food bank every single month.

My question is for the Prime Minister. How many Canadians are going to use a food bank when he implements the carbon tax 2.0?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this question period, we have heard a price on pollution described by Conservatives as rubbish and just now as a failed scam. That is astonishing because every single Conservative MP was elected on a promise to introduce a price on pollution. This is what their platform said: We will assess progress so carbon prices can be on a path to \$170 a tonne.

When were Conservatives telling the truth? Was it when they were asking for votes or in the House today?

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Prime Minister likes the carbon tax so much that he created a second one. Carbon tax 1 is already inflating the price of groceries. It is going to cost a family of four more than \$1,000 more in this coming year. Carbon tax 2 is only going to make that worse. Food bank use is already at record highs with one in five families skipping meals. Now a family farm will face up to \$150,000 more in taxes by the time this carbon tax is through.

When will the Prime Minister get the facts and stop the tax?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a responsible government does is fight pollution while, at the same time, helping Canadians who need it most, especially when the cost of living is high. What a responsible government does is build the economy of tomorrow by investing in our businesses while helping Canadians cope with the cost of living through the grocery rebate, for example.

What we do know is that the Conservatives are being completely irresponsible, particularly by voting against the budget, which includes targeted measures to help Canadians. When will the Conservatives become a little more responsible for the good of Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, carbon tax 1 is inflating the price of groceries, making it more expensive for families to put food on their tables. Food bank use is at record highs and one in five Canadians are skipping meals. The average farm of 5,000 acres will pay up to \$150,000 for the first failed carbon tax. Carbon tax 2 is only going to make things that much worse. Families cannot afford food.

When will this jet-setting, out-of-touch Prime Minister finally realize the more he goes woke, the faster Canadians are going broke?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, our Conservative colleagues are providing incomplete information.

I would like to remind members of all the efforts we are making to help and support our farmers, who are the first to be affected by climate change.

One example is the agricultural clean technology program, which is accepting applications from June 1 to June 22. I encourage all farmers who are in transition, who are in the process of purchasing specialized equipment such as biodigesters and grain dryers, to take advantage of this program.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's cultural sector is in mourning. Yesterday, actor Michel Côté passed away.

For decades, Quebeckers enjoyed and admired his immense talent. He left his mark on several generations and achieved the rare feat of captivating audiences not only in the theatre, but also on television and the big screen.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, can the Minister of Canadian Heritage share a few words about Mr. Côté's impact on our culture?

• (1505)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to offer my deepest condolences to the family, friends and loved ones of Michel Côté.

Michel, we loved him for his humour, his sensitivity, his sincerity and his absolutely extraordinary talent. With his roles in *De père en flic*, *Broue*, *Cruising Bar*, *Omertà* and *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, he left his mark on several generations of Quebeckers.

Simply put, when we see Michel Côté's name on a film, a show or a play, we know it is going to be good.

Thank you, Michel, for everything. Like many Quebeckers, I will raise a glass in his honour.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, violent crime is up 32%. Just three days ago in my community, a notorious and violent repeat offender was arrested for a break-in just hours after his release from court.

The RCMP revealed this man has generated 421 police files and has been charged with 64 offences since 2016, including assault. Our streets are more dangerous and the Liberal bail legislation will still allow many violent repeat offenders to be released.

Will the government take bail reform seriously and keep violent repeat offenders out of our communities?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-48 targets precisely violent repeat offenders with weapons.

We have been working in close collaboration with the provinces since last October in order to not only come up with a bill that is charter-compliant but also listen to concerns raised by police associations, provincial ministers of justice and public safety ministers. We have come up with a bill that addresses that.

Here is what the Canadian Police Association had to say with respect to the bill: “we appreciate that [ministers]...have worked collaboratively with stakeholders and introduced this common-sense legislation that responds to the concerns”.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has increased violent crime by 32% in Canada. Last Wednesday, I had a ride-along with the City of Saskatoon Police to see first-hand the mess that these guys have created in our streets. That night, I witnessed an arrest of an individual who had almost a dozen warrants out for her—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is happening on one side and then on the other side. I am going to ask the hon. member to restart his question, and I want everybody to listen.

Oral Questions

Earlier, there was something that was very sensitive and I saw some people laughing out there. I just want to point that out, because it is very insensitive to do that. So, please, pay attention to what is being said so that we can all react appropriately, and by appropriately, I mean parliamentary appropriately, not what members might think is the proper response in their minds.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—University from the top.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government, over the last eight years, has driven up violent crime by over 32%.

Last Wednesday, I had an opportunity to go for a ride-along with the City of Saskatoon Police to see the mess that the government has created in the streets. That night, I witnessed an arrest of an individual who had over a dozen warrants out for her arrest. Her most recent charge happened at a safe injection site where she took a utility knife to another addict and cut him from his ear to his mouth.

Violent criminals should not be on bail—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have introduced Bill C-48 precisely to address violent repeat offenders with weapons, including knives, which was raised by Manitoba and other provinces. We have done that working in collaboration.

Here is what the Saskatoon police Deputy Chief Cam McBride, who I am sure is a friend of the hon. member, said about our new federal bail. He said that it is “a good move forward. It’s encouraging to see the voices of the community and the policing community across Canada are being heard”.

We have the support of the police. We have the support of provinces and territories here. The only person we do not have the support of is the Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this Liberal government, violent crime has increased by 32%. Every member of the House should be concerned about that, because 32% is a huge increase.

When we consider, for example, the case of Jonathan Gravel, who was sentenced to serve 20 months in the comfort of his own home after being convicted of aggravated sexual assault, it becomes clear that the government has lost its way.

I would, however, like to ask a question. Is the Prime Minister prepared to support a bill that would seek to create an offence for breach of parole and to put violent criminals back in prison rather than letting them serve their sentence at home?

• (1510)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, serious crimes deserve serious consequences.

What we are doing is implementing criminal law reforms that are based on evidence, not meaningless slogans.

With regard to Bill C-48, the president of the Canadian Police Association, Tom Stamatakis, said that police officers appreciate

that the ministers “worked collaboratively with stakeholders and introduced this common-sense legislation that responds to the concerns that our members have raised.”

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has what the world needs, particularly in our ability to harness our natural resources to power the world. In Atlantic Canada, we have immense opportunities to utilize offshore wind to drive hydrogen and green ammonia production while decarbonizing our electricity grids. There needs to be regulatory certainty to ensure Canada can attract the capital at home and around the world.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources speak to Bill C-49, which was tabled this morning, and the ongoing work he is doing with the governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to make sure that our region is the best in the world and can drive our energy future?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kings—Hants for his consistent advocacy on this file.

Canadians expect their governments to accept the scientific reality of climate change and to take concrete action to address it, something our colleagues across the aisle could learn, and they expect us to look to seize the—

Mr. Clifford Small: Why did you turn down the tidal project?

The Speaker: I am going to ask the minister to start over. The member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame has been shouting quite a bit and it is getting a little out of hand. I am going to ask him to quiet down.

The minister can start from the top, please.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Kings—Hants for his consistent advocacy on this file.

Canadians expect their governments to accept the scientific reality that is climate change and to take concrete and bold action, something our colleagues across the aisle could learn from. They also expect us to look to seize the economic opportunities that can be enabled through a transition to a lower-carbon future. One such opportunity is offshore wind to produce electricity and produce hydrogen. By 2040, the global offshore wind market is predicted to attract \$1 trillion of investments, and our east coast has some of the best resources in the world.

Today I was pleased to introduce amendments to the offshore accord acts, the legislation—

Government Orders

The Speaker: The member for Vancouver Kingsway.

* * *

PHARMACARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yet another study once again proves public pharmacare saves our health care system money: \$1,500 per patient every year. It also reveals patients cannot access medicine because of cost. This means more hospital visits, needless suffering and billions of dollars wasted.

The New Democrats have pushed for public pharmacare for decades because we know it saves lives and money, and the Liberals have promised it since 1997. Will the minister finally implement public pharmacare to keep our bottom line and Canadians healthy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows really well, we are working together. I thank them for their partnership in keeping up and supporting the hard work we have done until now in increasing accessibility, increasing affordability and increasing the appropriateness of the use of drugs across Canada.

We put in place strong regulations a few months ago to bring the prices of patented medicines in Canada closer to what we want to see across the world. We have also invested in a new Canadian drug agency and will be doing a lot more.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is in open defiance of its legal obligations to ensure health care for first nations children under Jordan's principle. We have children in British Columbia who are now being denied therapy because the government refuses to pay the bills. We have speech pathologists in northern Ontario who are facing bankruptcy this week because of the minister's policy of delay and denied payment for Jordan's principle. Without these treatments, these children's lives are going to be permanently impacted.

The minister has been asked again and again to stand up for the children. Why is she refusing to respect her legal duties under Jordan's principle?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that prioritizes access to care for children all across this country. Indigenous children are receiving care through hundreds of thousands of products and services as a result of the action this government has taken.

In respect of the provider the member opposite is speaking about, the member now has a dedicated service provider in the department working to ensure that invoices are correctly submitted and remitted in payment as quickly as possible.

• (1515)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Right Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, who is accompanied by one of the deputy speakers, the Right Hon. Nigel Evans.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Timothy Halman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of the motion that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Red Deer—Mountain View to the motion at third reading stage of Bill S-5.

Call in the members.

• (1545)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 337)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Bloch	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay

Government Orders

Gallant	Généreux	Drouin	Dubourg
Genuis	Gladu	Duclos	Duguid
Godin	Goodridge	Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
Gourde	Gray	El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Hallan	Hoback	Fergus	Fillmore
Jeneroux	Kelly	Fisher	Fonseca
Kmiec	Kram	Fortier	Fortin
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Kusie	Lake	Freeland	Fry
Lantsman	Lawrence	Gaheer	Garon
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)	Garrison	Gaudreau
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert	Gazan	Gerretsen
Lloyd	Lobb	Gill	Gould
Maguire	Martel	Green	Guilbeault
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Hajdu	Hanley
McLean	Melillo	Hardie	Hepfner
Moore	Morantz	Holland	Housefather
Morrison	Motz	Hughes	Hutchings
Muys	Nater	Iacono	Idlout
O'Toole	Patzer	Ien	Jaczek
Paul-Hus	Perkins	Johns	Jowhari
Poillievre	Redekopp	Julian	Kayabaga
Reid	Rempel Garner	Kelloway	Khalid
Richards	Roberts	Khera	Koutrakis
Rood	Ruff	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Scheer	Schmale	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Seeback	Shields	Lametti	Lamoureux
Shipley	Small	Lapointe	Larouche
Soroka	Steinley	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Stewart	Strahl	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Stubbs	Thomas	Lemire	Long
Tochor	Tolmie	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Uppal	Van Popta	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Vidal	Vien	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Viersen	Vis	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Vuong	Wagantall	Masse	Mathysen
Warkentin	Waugh	May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Webber	Williams	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Williamson	Zimmer— 114	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)

NAYS**Members**

Aldag	Alghabra	Mendicino	Miao
Ali	Anand	Michaud	Miller
Anandasangaree	Angus	Morrice	Morrissey
Arseneault	Arya	Murray	Naqvi
Ashton	Atwin	Ng	Noormohamed
Bachrach	Badawey	Normandin	O'Connell
Bains	Baker	Oliphant	O'Regan
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Pauzé	Perron
Battiste	Beaulieu	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Beech	Bendayan	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Bennett	Bergeron	Rayes	Robillard
Bérubé	Bibeau	Rodriguez	Rogers
Bittle	Blair	Romanado	Sahota
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas	Sajjan	Saks
Blaney	Blois	Samson	Sarai
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Bradford	Brière	Schiefke	Serré
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings	Sgro	Shanahan
Casey	Chabot	Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Chagger	Chahal	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Champagne	Champoux	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Chatel	Chen	Sorbara	Sousa
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier	Sudds	Tassi
Coteau	Dabrusin	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Damoff	Davies	Therrien	Thompson
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens	Trudeau	Trudel
Desilets	Desjarlais	Turnbull	Valdez
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Diab	Dong	Vandal	Vandenbeld
		Vecchio	Vignola
		Villemure	Virani
		Weiler	Wilkinson

Yip
Zarrillo

Zahid
Zuberi — 210

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a technical matter with respect to the vote that just took place. I was attempting to vote using the app and received a notice on my phone saying that my vote had been flagged and may not have gone through. I rushed down here to participate in the new vote in person and to confirm that my yeas vote was in fact recorded.

The Speaker: Yes, it did go by and was counted as a yes.

The next question is on the main motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1550)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 338*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher

Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Miao
Miller
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Government Orders

Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi — 208

Privilege

NAYS

[English]

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genus	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kmicc	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Martel
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poillievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 116

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 29 minutes.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP to address the question of privilege raised by the member for Durham this morning.

We in the NDP are extremely concerned about the situation facing the member for Durham, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, our colleague, the member for Vancouver East, and, potentially, other members.

In a ruling delivered on September 19, 1973, Speaker Lamoureux stated at page 6709 of the Debates that he had:

...no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation.

As the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills said in his question of privilege, we believe that intimidation and threats are breaches of members' privilege and of the House as an institution. We have no doubt that this is a prima facie question of privilege, and we support its being dealt with as such, whether it is in the context of the work that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is currently doing as a result of the motion moved by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills or as a separate matter.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I will take that under advisement and return to the House.

Business of Supply

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my speech by talking about the impact of foreign interference on people. In our country, there are countless Canadians who have fled oppressive countries and oppressive regimes to come to Canada to make Canada their home, hoping to be free from that oppression and to be able to live in security, safety and liberty. Sadly, the same oppression that they fled often follows these Canadians to their new home country. I want to talk about some of the communities that are impacted. Many of us have heard from members of the Iranian community who continue to be targeted by the Iranian government for raising concerns about the human rights violations going on in Iran. We hear from activists, in Canada, of Iranian descent who took up the call of the “women, life, liberty” chants of revolution and justice, only to find out that they are being targeted here in Canada and that their family members are being targeted.

We know of people who leave India to come to Canada who are also being targeted. People from Muslim communities are targeted for being outspoken about the treatment of minority Muslim communities. Women activists who raise concerns about the systemic oppression of women in India, Christians and followers of other minority religions, and activists fighting the caste system are targeted, and their family members are targeted. We also know of many members of the Sikh community who are specifically targeted for their activism, for raising questions of human rights violations, systemic violations of human rights perpetrated by the Indian state against Sikhs. They are targeted with visa denial and with threats to their family. Of course, we know Canadians of Chinese descent who are targeted here in Canada, whether it is through the police stations that are set up and targeting Canadians of Chinese descent, or targeted at those who support the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong or those who are raising concerns about the human rights violations facing Uyghur people.

We know that members of Parliament have been targeted, like the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and the member for Vancouver East, among others. There is a direct impact on people because of foreign interference.

We also know that it has an impact on our democracy. The New Democratic Party, naturally, as our name states, has a very strong relationship with and fierce belief in defending democracy. We believe in the importance of voting and want to see more Canadians participate in voting. Voting matters because we hope that people vote and then vote for change, and that change will make people's lives better. We believe in the power of people, unlike the leader of the Conservative Party, who does not actually have an interest in increasing voting participation, because his party benefits from cynicism and attacking institutions that lower voter turnout because lower voter turnouts are favourable to the Conservative Party. It does not actually have an interest in increasing voter participation, and has often put in place laws that discourage voting and make voting turnout harder.

The Liberal Party and the Prime Minister are seeking to sweep these allegations of foreign interference under the rug because they seek to hold onto power and are not taking these allegations seriously. Unlike both of them, New Democrats are committed to taking this matter seriously and forcing action.

• (1605)

[Translation]

When the Prime Minister of our country ignores serious allegations of foreign interference, that hurts our democracy. When the leader of the Conservative Party wants to score points and play petty politics instead of taking these allegations seriously, that is another example of a party that is not serious about democracy. It is our profound belief as New Democrats that we need to defend our democratic system.

[English]

To defend our democracy, we need to be clear that, with respect to restoring the confidence of Canadians, there is a serious concern about the appearance of bias. This does not go to the conclusions or to the work, but, if there is an appearance of bias, it undermines the trust that Canadians have in the process and the work that is being done. If that confidence is undermined, then we cannot see any action that will restore the trust that Canadians have. The clear example of that trust being undermined is the fact that the special rapporteur engaged, as principal lawyer, Ms. Sheila Block, who has a clear track record of having donated to the Liberal Party in every election since the early 2000s.

As she is someone who was tasked with analyzing and reviewing the documents and preparing the report, that is clear evidence of a bias. This is coupled with the fact that the report does not challenge any assertions made by the government. The government made assertions, and those assertions are then repeated in the report. That gives a clear appearance of bias that undermines and erodes the work of the special rapporteur.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Clearly, all decision-makers must be perceived as unbiased. If it is a judge, the judge must be unbiased. In the case of the special rapporteur, there is a clear perception of bias that is undermining the effort to restore confidence in our electoral system, and that is unacceptable.

[English]

From the beginning, New Democrats have highlighted that the government failed to take the allegations of foreign interference seriously. Appointing a special rapporteur instead of having a public inquiry was the first mistake. The report just accepts the government's findings without any push-back or any rigorous examination of the government's assertions. Now, the clear appearance of bias makes it no longer tenable for Mr. Johnston to continue in his work.

Business of Supply

That is why we have been calling for a public inquiry. From the beginning, we have said that a public inquiry is a process that has the rigour necessary to take this matter seriously. It would give Canadians transparency; moreover, it would allow the cross-examination of witnesses, and it would be independent. That is a process that will restore faith in our electoral system.

[Translation]

We have said all along that we need an independent and transparent process, such as a public inquiry, to restore confidence in our electoral system and clearly show that these allegations are being taken seriously and that we want to do more to strengthen our democracy.

[English]

What New Democrats are calling for, to this extent, is to restore confidence in our electoral system. We want Canadians to believe that their votes matter. We want Canadians to vote more. We want to reverse the tide of apathy, which has seen voter turnout continue to decline. We know that these allegations of foreign interference are certainly going to contribute to that erosion in public trust, which will contribute to lowering voter turnout.

We want to keep our democracy safe. We want to keep Canadians and parliamentarians safe from foreign interference. That is why we are calling for two specific things in this motion. First, we want the government to remove Mr. Johnston from his position as special rapporteur, not as a personal slight, but because he can no longer restore the confidence of Canadians in our electoral process given the clear appearance of bias. Second, we want the government to launch a public inquiry to investigate this matter and to give clear conclusions that strengthen and reinforce our democracy.

The Prime Minister ignored the evidence. The Conservatives and their leader do not even want to look at the evidence. I will be looking at the evidence, and I will not be ignoring it. I will take it seriously, continue to pursue a public inquiry and use all tools to continue to force that.

I want Canadians to know that we are taking this matter seriously, because I truly believe in the strength of our democracy. I believe we can reinforce and strengthen it. Mr. Johnston is an honourable man and has shown a clear track record of service to country. I am very certain that, upon seeing the will of this House, Mr. Johnston will himself withdraw as the special rapporteur.

I want the government to understand that this is a matter we take seriously, that our democracy is something that we have to be vigilant to defend and that to do so, we need a public inquiry. At this point, Mr. Johnston needs to be removed as special rapporteur. That is what our democracy calls for, and that is what New Democrats are demanding.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Edmonton Strathcona, who participated in the study that was done at the Canada-China committee, where the report was tabled a couple of weeks ago. In that regard, in the recommendations is a call for a foreign agents registry; there are also a lot of other pieces that could, in fact, form the terms of reference for some form of inquiry.

Given the fact that so much of what we have had exposure to is all covered by the Official Secrets Act and could never actually be made public, could the hon. member for Burnaby South give us more details as to what he would see as those terms of reference?

• (1615)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to be clear. We have a template of how to proceed in this type of sensitive situation. I want to acknowledge that there are matters of national security, and it is in our interest to keep them secret. Doing so ensures that our secret services can continue to do their work and that their process, the work they do and those that they rely upon will remain safe and secret, so that our work can continue.

Given that, we have seen in the Rouleau commission that there is an approach that recognizes national security but still allows for the rigour of a public examination. This is the template that I would suggest we follow. A public inquiry, as the Rouleau commission showed, could involve elements where a judge is independently ruling on what matters should be brought before the public. There would then be cross-examination of statements made, for a testing of evidence, which is far better than one person's opinion.

That is why we need a public inquiry.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the most disturbing comments, I think, in the Johnston report is right here in the conclusions, on page 5.

It says, “There are serious shortcomings in the way intelligence is communicated and processed from security agencies through to government”. Clearly, the government is not doing its job. This, I believe, is negligence. I believe that a minister should resign over this. We are talking about foreign interference.

I think that, under the Westminster parliamentary tradition, somebody should resign. It is that serious. Would the hon. member for Burnaby South have any comments on that?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that the allegations of foreign interference are serious and that the Johnston report actually highlighted some shortcomings. One of those was the fact that there was a clear breakdown in communication between CSIS and the government.

It is absolutely the role of the minister to be proactive in getting information and following up on that information. I would also add that, according to the Johnston report, while the Prime Minister and the ministers were aware of allegations, they were not told what to do. They chose not to pursue it any further.

Business of Supply

I think that showed a serious lack of judgment. We expect the government, upon hearing allegations of foreign interference, even if it is not given clear steps that it is recommended to take, to be proactive in asking for follow-ups. It should do its own follow-up to ensure that its systems are strong enough to respond to foreign interference. Therefore, I agree that there are serious mistakes that the government made, as well as shortcomings, and it should be held accountable.

That is why this vote, hopefully, will push for a public inquiry and remove Mr. Johnston from the special rapporteur position.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the NDP for tabling this motion.

There is something about it that seems a little unusual, a little strange or ambivalent coming from the NDP. A few weeks ago, the NDP openly praised David Johnston's appointment. Its position led me to believe that the NDP supported the work that David Johnston was about to undertake.

Leader, can you explain this position to me?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member must address his comments and questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Burnaby South, with a brief reply.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we have not criticized Mr. Johnston personally, then or now. Our criticism concerns the appearance of bias. It concerns the fact that there are many examples and a large body of evidence showing the appearance of bias, which is detracting from efforts to restore confidence in our system. This appearance of bias is why we are demanding that the government relieve Mr. Johnston of his duties. We are not attacking him personally; we are attacking the appearance of bias, which prevents us from being able to move forward with this special rapporteur.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to this opposition day motion introduced by the NDP. I believe that the manner in which the New Democrats have brought this forward is very unfortunate.

I am becoming more and more concerned with the willingness of this House to arbitrarily attempt to ruin reputations and smear great Canadians, people who put service above self and people who come and offer themselves to make our country better. I am quickly reminded of the time when, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NDP helped the Bloc and the Conservatives drag the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada before this House, before the bar. It is an archaic tradition in the Westminster parliamentary system that had happened only twice in the history of this Parliament.

For nothing more than cheap political points, the NDP helped the Conservatives and the Bloc drag an individual before the bar, so that they could scold the individual publicly. I see this happening more and more, especially from the Conservatives. I find it alarming when I see our friends from the NDP doing it.

I would like to start by reading some stuff that has been said about Mr. Johnston. Stephen Harper said, "Mr. Johnston has a strong record of public service, a broad base of support and an impressive list of achievements.... He has extensive legal expertise, a comprehensive understanding of government and a deep appreciation of the duties and tasks now before him." We can also listen to what the member for Calgary Midnapore said at a PROC meeting in March 2019. She said, "There's no doubt as to the integrity and the experience and the resumé of Mr. Johnston."

At a PROC meeting in November 2018, the member for Perth—Wellington said, "It always begs the question, 'What about the next appointment?' I don't think anyone has any qualms about David Johnston—he's an exceptional human being and an exceptional Canadian—but what about next time?" They were anxiously waiting for Mr. Johnston's next appearance on the Canadian stage. That was the member for Perth—Wellington.

I have another comment from the member for Calgary Midnapore from November 6, 2018, at a PROC meeting. She said, "Thank you for being here today. Of course, as a woman, I have tremendous respect for you since you raised four amazing women. Congratulations. I think that's a wonderful accomplishment." In a November 2020 PROC meeting, the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan said, "I agree wholeheartedly with your assessment that Mr. Johnston is an eminent Canadian."

The member for Sarnia—Lambton recently said, "I am very happy to have been able to speak today about the value of the role of Governor General and to give honour to the many who have served well in that role, such as the Right Hon. David Johnston." The member for Thornhill, who is the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, simply put out a seven-word tweet on April 17, 2021. She said, "Who misses the Rt. Hon David Johnston?"

Those are words from Conservatives. Conservatives had great things to say about David Johnston. By all their accounts, he was indeed an exceptional Canadian who did exceptional things, until he was suddenly asked to look into something and perhaps form an opinion that did not quite jive with the Conservative way of approaching things and the Conservative narrative.

If we flash forward to today, this is what Conservatives are now suddenly saying about David Johnston: The member for Calgary Forest Lawn said, "Another random Liberal tasked by the Prime Minister to support his corruption and scandals. Nothing to see here folks".

An hon. member: Good reading.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, I will continue to read what the Conservatives have been saying.

Business of Supply

Madam Speaker, the member for Thornhill, who had that seven-word tweet praising and pining for the days of David Johnston to return, said, “The Prime Minister appoints Trudeau Foundation insider to tell us that we don’t need a public inquiry into Beijing’s donations to the Trudeau Foundation & their election interference.” Wow, what a change of heart this is from the member for Thornhill.

● (1620)

The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, my neighbouring riding, said, “Trudeau Foundation board member appointed by [the Prime Minister] to report to [the Prime Minister] on if there should be a public inquiry that could be damaging to [the Prime Minister]. This seems fine.” Of course, it was in his sarcastic tone that we are all so used to hearing in this House.

The member for Regina—Qu’Appelle said, “[The Prime Minister] names another Trudeau Foundation insider to tell us we don’t need an inquiry into Beijing’s interference.”

The Leader of the Opposition, himself, said in a tweet just days ago, “We see today that his ski buddy, cottage neighbour, family friend and member of the Beijing-financed Trudeau Foundation came out and did exactly what I predicted”.

What a bunch of hypocrites they are: the gall, the audacity. I guess I might be able to wrap my head around it if it were different Conservatives who were saying one thing a couple of years ago and now others suddenly taking a new approach, but it is the exact same people. The member for Thornhill, who longed for the days of David Johnston, is now suddenly accusing him of being an insider. I just cannot wrap my head around it.

Well, I can when we look at the way that Conservatives routinely will trample on anybody’s reputation and will trample on anything that they absolutely see as being an opportunity to squeeze out a tiny bit of political gain. Of course, the gravy would be the fundraising that they do off that because we know that they use all this for their fundraising purposes, one can only imagine how many times. I would love to have the analytics on how many times David Johnston has been used in fundraising email blasts that come from the Conservatives. I am sure it is way up there.

It looks like the member for Abbotsford is agreeing with me, so I guess they do use him in fundraising.

See, that is what we are talking about here. The Leader of the Opposition has a job to do as His Majesty’s Loyal Opposition. He is supposed to hold the government to account and that is completely understandable, completely acceptable and absolutely within the realm of what he is supposed to do. The problem is that he is not interested in that. He is interested only in trying to spread misinformation, and create and exaggerate conspiracies where they do not exist.

What I find to be the most troubling is that he will do this completely at the expense of eminent Canadians who have served our country, such as an individual like David Johnston who was appointed as governor general by Stephen Harper when the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, sat in that government. The Conservatives do not seem to have any regard at all. They have

no shame at all in just trampling over top of people if they think they can just get an ounce of political gain out of it.

I am glad that the member for Burnaby South got—

● (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seem to be individuals who are really anxious to ask questions, but now is not the time so I would ask them to wait until such time as I call for questions and comments. In the meantime, they might want to jot them down so they do not forget them.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pause and reflect on what I was going to say.

The Leader of the Opposition recently said that he does not want to be silenced. He does not want to take a briefing. The Prime Minister said that the government realizes there is a lot going on with national security and wants to make sure all parties are informed. The special rapporteur, David Johnston, recommended that party leaders receive a briefing so they can understand what is going on. At the heart of this, hopefully at the heart of what we are all doing here, is to serve Canadians in the best interest of Canadians. At the heart of this is allowing those who are in these positions of power, whether that is government or opposition, to have the ability to understand the facts, to get that proper security classification and to receive the briefings.

I applaud the member for Burnaby South, the leader of the NDP, for actually agreeing to do that. I disagree with the motion the NDP brought forward, but what I find remarkable is how the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Bloc just brush it off. They say that they do not want to be silenced. That is such a ludicrous statement.

My colleague, the member for Pickering—Uxbridge, stood in this House, gave a 20-minute speech earlier, replied to questions for 10 minutes and she full-on told us during her intervention today that she was a member of NSICOP, she has the security clearances and she receives briefings, but she is capable of deciphering between what is classified and what is not. It has in no way limited her ability to represent her constituents. It has not limited her ability to participate in debate. Other members from the Conservative Party are in the same position as her, and indeed it has not silenced her.

When I asked the Leader of the Opposition that question earlier today after he spoke, he gave the most ridiculous answer. I asked him why he would not take the briefing and if it was really about being silenced. Nobody else who has that classification and who has seen those documents is silenced, but he seems to be the only one who would end up being silenced. I asked him if it was just that he wanted to be willfully ignorant so he does not have to be responsible. His response to me was that he knew the way this would work, and he would go into the Prime Minister’s Office, who would throw a bunch of papers on the desk and then put a big stamp on them and say that he could not say a word when he left.

This is an individual who wants to be the leader of the country, and this is the manner in which he thinks security and intelligence is shared in a G7 country, a Five Eyes alliance partner. This is the way he thinks confidential information is shared. He would just go on up to the Prime Minister's Office in West Block, who would throw down some papers on the table and tell him to read them and to not say anything when he leaves. I cannot wrap my head around how somebody can actually think that is how it happens.

Of course he knows better than that and he knows that is not the way it is, but he is playing that game, and I cannot understand why he thinks playing that game and acting that way is something that will resonate with Canadians. I do not understand how he thinks Canadians will take assurances in somebody who acts that way as being responsible enough to be the prime minister of this country, which is ultimately what he seeks to do. I find it very perplexing.

The Leader of the Opposition is trying to hide behind a veil of ignorance. He is trying to not participate. He is trying to not have any information because he just wants to continue doing what he is doing, which is ranting on, pointing fingers at the Prime Minister, talking about the Trudeau Foundation and clipping that.

The leader of this opposition participates in this House of Commons, and to his credit he enjoys being in here, more than I have seen any other leader from that side of the House in the time I have been here. What he does with it is he comes in here, gives this speech and could probably care less who is talking to. He then takes the clip, blasts it out in an email and tells people to look at how he is standing up for them. He then tells them to send money and click "donate now" and to give them more of their money so they can use it to beat the Liberals.

I will shift gears for a second.

• (1630)

Now I want to address the fact that the NDP is bringing forward this motion. The NDP is taking a really interesting stance on this. New Democrats are basically saying that they really respect David Johnston, he is an eminent Canadian, he has done all these great things and they respect him. They respect him to be able to do this work, but they just do not respect the fact that he has come to an outcome that they disagree with. That is the only way I can read this.

Here is what David Christopherson had to say, the former NDP member. He was a member of this House for a very long time, had a lot of character when he was in here, he represented—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are still individuals who seem to think it is question and comment time, and it is not. There is another five minutes and 43 seconds left. It is coming, so I would just ask members to wait. I know they are anxious.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, David Christopherson sat on the procedure and House affairs committee. He was in this chamber for a very long time. He was well regarded among my NDP colleagues and indeed probably by everybody in this House.

Business of Supply

Here is what he had to say when he was before David Johnston at a PROC committee just a couple of years ago: "You are the gold standard of public service and I can't imagine any position for which you wouldn't be eminently qualified to represent Canadians and bring that fairness and values, and your integrity and your intelligence, your experience, to bear." He went on to say, "I have the highest regard for you, as does my caucus, and if at the end of the day, you end up being the debates commissioner, we as a country would be well served."

That is David Christopherson, the former NDP member from Hamilton, who made those comments. If he is correct and the NDP feels the way Mr. Christopherson does about David Johnston, they cannot have it both ways. They cannot say someone is an eminent Canadian who is overly qualified to do this and whose integrity and intelligence are above everybody else's, and then all of a sudden, when they get a report from him, say they do not like what he said, so it is best that he step aside and we do it a different way. I am very perplexed by it. I cannot understand why the NDP is skating this line, trying to position themselves somewhere between thinking David Johnston is amazing and saying he has to go because they do not like the report he produced.

Members will note that NDP members were not calling for David Johnston to leave a week ago. They only started doing that when he brought out this report. In their eyes, the only difference they could have possibly had between then and now is the fact that this report came out. They do not like what he said in the report, but I will tell my NDP colleagues, as can anybody who sits on the PROC committee and heard the witnesses who came forward, that Mr. Johnston's reasoning for not having a public inquiry jibes exactly with what the head of the RCMP, the head of CSIS and the national security intelligence people said. All of these individuals, who came before committee, told us the exact same thing. He came to the exact same conclusion the experts were telling us in committee.

I am glad to see the member for Burnaby South is willing to accept and receive classified information in order to understand how Mr. Johnston came to these conclusion, but two other parties in this House, which are supposed to be here for the purpose of holding the government accountable, are not even interested in the information that would give them the ability to hold the government accountable.

It should not come as a surprise that I will vote against the opposition day motion. There has been a lot of talk, and I find it very unfortunate that we seem to be on this crusade of trampling over the reputations of Canadians, with a willingness to do whatever is possible for a bit of political gain. Again I am reminded, and I have thought about it several times today, that I was one of the only Liberals sitting in the House of Commons during the pandemic, in this exact same seat, when the Conservatives, the NDP and the Bloc dragged the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada before the bar just for political gain.

Business of Supply

I understand where the NDP is on this. If we want to assess the politics of it, the NDP is just trying to find a difference between themselves and the Liberals. The only way they can really do it is by trying to shift things a bit to say they will call out David Johnston and call for the firing of David Johnston. They dragged the president of PHAC to the bar of the House of Commons, which had only happened prior to that twice in the history of this country. They had no problem doing that.

This is for political gain. It is for no reason other than that, and I find it shameful. It is one thing to have a debate and an open discussion about the best way forward for this country in light of foreign interference. It is a whole other thing when we start trampling over people's reputations, in particular people who cannot defend themselves in here and people who have served this country with incredible distinction over the years.

• (1635)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, the only party that has been trampling on the reputation of the former governor general is the Liberal Party. Its members knew that there was a perceived conflict of interest with the links to the Trudeau Foundation and with the close family ties going all the way back to Pierre Elliott Trudeau. It was very clear that there was an obvious conflict of interest. That right there was enough for them to realize that they should look beyond Mr. Johnston. In a country of close to 40 million people, surely to goodness they could have found one person who did not have ties to the Trudeau Foundation and who did not have ties to the Prime Minister's family.

How is it that the Liberal government, every single time it decides to do something, is found to have a conflict of interest? Let us just look at the infrastructure minister's sister-in-law being appointed as the interim ethics commissioner. Again, that was a conflict of interest. Why is it that, every time this government does something, it becomes tied up in an ethics violation?

• (1640)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, when the member for Perth—Wellington said, “It always begs the question, What about the next appointment? I don't think anyone has any qualms about David Johnston—”

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Five years ago.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands had an opportunity to ask a question. It is not time for him to answer that question or to ask another, unless I ask for questions and comments again. I would ask the hon. member to hold off on any other comments that he has.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member's colleague, a sitting Conservative MP, said, “I don't think anyone has any qualms about David Johnston—he's an exceptional human being and an exceptional Canadian”.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: In 2018.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, how could that possibly lead anybody to believe that Conservatives would have a problem with David Johnston, when the member for Perth—Wellington is saying that in committee?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have mentioned to the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands that it was not time for him to make any more comments or ask any more questions. Unless he has already given a speech, he may want to see if he can get on the list. However, in the meantime, I would ask him not to be yelling across the way when somebody else has the floor.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague's speech, and I think there is a little bit of confusion about what a conflict of interest or a perception of a conflict of interest is and what it means when such a charge is made.

Nobody is questioning the eminence of David Johnston or his lifetime of service. Many eminent people can have impeccable integrity but can still be caught in a conflict of interest or a potential or perceived conflict of interest simply because of their relationships. Mr. Johnston obviously had a family relationship with the Trudeau family, including skiing with the children of the Trudeau family. He was on the board of directors of the Trudeau Foundation, the same Trudeau Foundation that is implicated in the interference file because of its reception of money from the Chinese government.

Does the member not agree that the optics are such, leaving aside Mr. Johnston's pristine reputation and record, which we do not doubt, that this places him in a perceived conflict of interest? Does he not agree that it would be better for everybody and for Canadians' confidence if we found another eminent Canadian, with the same impeccable credentials but who is not in a perceived conflict of interest, to look into this matter?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the member that he has to be careful, as he did mention the Prime Minister's last name when he talked about the family. I would ask the member to be careful when he is using the name. I know that he mentioned the foundation, but he also mentioned the family.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, for starters, the member said that nobody is calling into question Mr. Johnston's reputation. Well, members of the NDP may be saying that they are not, but let us not forget that the Conservatives are doing that in full force. They will not miss an opportunity to challenge and to call out his reputation.

Business of Supply

The member's question of perception is an excellent point. There is a difference between a conflict of interest and a perception of a conflict of interest, but let us not forget who has created that perception of a conflict of interest. The Conservatives have been doing that, the Bloc Québécois has been doing it, and now, for some reason, we see the NDP joining in on this too. However, nobody has purported and built upon that perception of a conflict of interest, which, in my opinion, does not exist, more than the Conservative Party of Canada has.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague puts on a pretty lively show. To hear him talk, we should give Mr. Johnston the Nobel Peace Prize, the Oscar for best actor, and the Medal of Bravery, and name him patriot of the year. While we are at it, we should call the Pope and ask him to elevate Mr. Johnston to sainthood. This is so absurd.

Today, we know that Mr. Johnston is a friend of the Trudeau family. That is documented. He himself does not deny it. How can he be objective when it comes to the Prime Minister? It is inconceivable. He co-chaired the “no” committee in 1995. The woman he hired as his legal adviser, whose name escapes me, is a Liberal Party donor, a fact that is well known and documented.

How can my colleague defend such a preposterously biased report? The only way to get to the bottom of this affair is to launch a full, independent commission of public inquiry. That concludes my intervention.

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the hon. member that he mentioned the Prime Minister's last name and that he should not do that in the House. I want to remind everyone once again to refer to members of the House by their title, not their name.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is incredibly flattering to have a former entertainer and actor himself refer to me as a very dramatic person. I take that as a compliment, and I appreciate it.

I do not think that former governor general David Johnston has a conflict of interest due to the fact he happened to live on the same street, was a neighbour, or one thing or another. I cannot understand how that would impact how he does his work. It certainly did not impact it in any way that prevented Stephen Harper from appointing him as a governor general. It certainly did not impact it in the manner in which so many Conservatives referred to him as an eminent Conservative, which I read about in my speech.

Getting back to the NDP's previous question, this is what I was talking about, what we are seeing right here, this display. This is where the perception of conflict of interest comes from. It comes from Conservatives and the Bloc getting up and repeatedly saying there is a conflict of interest. Just because they say it does not mean it is true.

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

Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could expand on his comments about the commissioner, David Johnston, making it very clear that there is an annex to the report, which has a security-related issue, and has really encouraged all three leaders of the opposition parties to listen to the briefing, read the report and participate so they will have a better understanding of why there is no need for a public inquiry. I wonder if he could provide his thoughts on that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the individual who the Conservatives and Bloc members want to jump all over and be so incredibly critical of delivered a report, stating what can be made public and that there is an annex to it. I really encourage them to get their security clearances so they can see the rest of it.

Now the leaders of the Bloc and the Conservative Party will be saying they have seen enough and know what they want to say, then jump up and start fundraising, and accusing the government and a character assassination of a former governor general, who Stephen Harper appointed. This is the reality of the situation. If nothing else it says to Canadians that this is it, they are not even interested.

The member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, is not even interested in looking at the classified information. It would not prevent him from talking about the rest of the public report. He could go on, just as he is right now, but also having that knowledge. Why would he want to have that knowledge? To properly inform himself to represent Canadians.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, we listened to a 20-minute speech from the member for Kingston and the Islands, and unfortunately, it was more heat than light.

Now he is accusing us, all the opposition parties, of creating this conflict of interest that David Johnston finds himself in. We are not creating it. We just uncovered it, and it was a pretty easy job to do. The fact he is a member of the Trudeau Foundation, which has become part of the story, is clearly a conflict of interest. I have a lot of respect for David Johnston, as do all my colleagues. That is why we are so disappointed that he accepted the appointment when he knew that he was in a conflict of interest.

I am not surprised the Prime Minister made the appointment because we are used to bad judgments there. Did nobody on the government side of the House advise the Prime Minister that this might turn out badly?

• (1650)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, when Conservatives say things like, “I do not think anyone has any qualms about David Johnston as he is an exceptional human being and an exceptional Canadian”, or when Conservatives say stuff like, “I agree wholeheartedly with the assessment that Mr. Johnston is an eminent Canadian”, or when Conservatives say things like, “There is no doubt as to the integrity, experience and résumé of Mr. Johnston”, how is anybody supposed to believe, based on those comments, that the Conservatives would have a problem with David Johnston? They do not, and do members know why? It is because their own former prime minister, Stephen Harper, appointed him Governor General.

Business of Supply

What the Conservatives do want is to score cheap political points for political gain and fundraising opportunities. That is all they are doing with this. That is what this entire exercise is about. They are smearing an individual's reputation, an individual who has served this country extremely well, and I find it absolutely disgraceful.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Carbon Pricing.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I start, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for North Island—Powell River.

I want to thank members of the House for providing me with the opportunity to talk today about this motion.

The New Democrats, of course, are disappointed by the recommendations from the special rapporteur. In order to move forward in a proactive and productive way, we are calling for the House of Commons to support our motion for a public inquiry.

Canadians deserve better than a process that raises doubts about the independence and impartiality of its conclusions. The integrity of our democratic institutions and protection of the diaspora communities are of paramount importance. It is essential that we address the allegations and concerns and restore the confidence of Canadians in our democratic processes. That is what the New Democrats are trying to do through this motion today.

The NDP leader was the first leader to call for a public inquiry on foreign interference. The NDP moved the motion at PROC calling for the inquiry and forced debate and a vote in the House in March. The NDP has now put forward this motion and will continue to use every tool we have as parliamentarians on this issue. I am proud that we are not afraid to do the real work and dig into this issue, unlike past consecutive governments.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have rejected our calls from the very beginning. They had an opportunity to show that they take this issue seriously at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, where the NDP was pushing for a public inquiry. Instead, they decided to filibuster our motion.

The Liberals' failed to call a public inquiry and are now hiding behind the recommendations of the special rapporteur they appointed. It undermines public confidence in the electoral process. This is part of a bigger pattern and one that worries me greatly.

My colleagues and I have a great deal of respect for the former governor general. We have been very clear about that today, a lot, but on this report we disagree. Again, I reference that the majority of members of the House disagree with him. I know that some folks have forgotten this in this place, but it is possible to disagree with someone, still respect them and still treat them with respect.

I disagree with Mr. Johnston's findings and the report, and I reference the fact that when he was investigating whether the leak that China preferred a minority Liberal government was true or not, he

wrote, "I asked the Prime Minister and ministers if they were aware of any orchestrated effort to elect a Liberal Party of Canada minority. They were not." Mr. Johnston dismissed this allegation simply because the Prime Minister and members of cabinet told him it was not true. I do not believe this is a sufficient reason.

Mr. Johnston also retained a lawyer to assist in obtaining, reviewing and analyzing the materials for interviews. The same lawyer was a donor to the Liberal Party of Canada between 2006 and 2022. Why was this not flagged as a conflict of interest?

Years of entitlement have skewed the government's perspective, and at a time when we need the Liberals to step up for the health of our democracy, they seem to want to say instead that everything is fine and there is nothing to see here. The longer they refuse to step up and the longer they refuse to call for a full public inquiry, the more Canadians are losing trust in the Liberals. More worrisome is that Canadians are losing faith in the institutions that are in place to serve them. More and more Canadians are disenfranchised and divided. We need all parliamentarians to come together to protect our democratic institutions and our diaspora communities.

While the Liberals are focusing on avoiding the headlines, the Conservatives are only interested in flinging mud and scoring political points. They are not interested in finding solutions. At committee, they filibustered and used bad faith tactics against the NDP motion on a public inquiry. They have used divisive rhetoric to divide Canadians and, sadly, to fundraise.

There was expert testimony at committee around the scope of foreign interference, not just by China but from Russia, India and Iran. They refused to talk about it. We have heard about the oppressive regimes harassing and targeting activists in diaspora communities. We have heard reports about foreigners financing the "freedom convoy". However, the Conservatives are not talking about that.

At the Standing Committee on National Defence, we just concluded a study on cyber-defence. We heard a lot of expert testimony on the threats of foreign interference and how states like Russia interfered during the convoy. I want to quote one of the expert witnesses we had, Marcus Kolga. He is a senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. He said:

The broad goal of Russian information warfare is to undermine public trust in our democracies and the cohesion of our societies. They do this by weaponizing issues and narratives that have the greatest potential to polarize us. They inject and amplify narratives that exploit both Conservative and Liberal biases and any issues that have the potential to drive wedges between Canadians.

● (1655)

We have seen this type of foreign interference through disinformation campaigns in action, and we know the tool box for foreign disinformation campaigns has only grown bigger with the emergence of technology.

Business of Supply

I will give a few examples. First, we are seeing the rapid expansion of deepfake videos. As artificial intelligence technology advances, it is becoming easier and easier to produce video content that looks incredibly real. They can create videos of politicians, newsmakers making announcements, news anchors breaking stories on major world events. These videos are completely fake and generated by a computer, but will be a powerful tool for disinformation campaigns.

Second, artificial intelligence is driving massive innovations in social media bots. Bad-faith actors will be able to create fake social media accounts, which they already do, but they will be able to engage with real Canadians and have full conversations. It will become increasingly difficult for everyday Canadians to tell the difference.

Third, the social media algorithms and data mining are always innovating. Big tech executives are finding new ways to get Canadians to increase their social media activity, and that has led to the proliferation of divisive content. These will be the new tools for foreign actors to drive wedges between Canadians, and if we do not get over the partisan and political games and mudslinging, if we do not get to the bottom of foreign interference through this public inquiry, those divisions and polarizations for Canadians will get worse. We want to work together to find a solution, a well-informed, facts-based solution.

In closing, I want to remind members on all sides of this House why foreign interference is occurring. Oppressive regimes are harassing, intimidating and silencing Canadians who are speaking out. I will quote my colleague from Vancouver East, who spoke this morning quite passionately about this issue. She said, “For people like me, who are outspoken against human rights violations, the genocide of the Uyghurs, the erosion of basic law in Hong Kong and the imposition of the National Security Law, we must be vigilant of attempts by foreign influence actors working to coerce, co-opt, re-orient, neutralize, or even silence our voices.”

This motion is not about Liberals avoiding another scandal or Conservatives making the evening news. This motion is about protecting human rights and the integrity of our democratic institutions, and creating a path forward that is reasonable and abides by the will of the majority of parliamentarians. That is what New Democrats put forward in this House in March and that is what we are putting forward in this House today. I hope the government will see that and respect the will of Parliament.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask for your perspective on the confidentiality and the security clearance needed to look at some of this information. The initial reservation we heard from people who thought a public inquiry was not a good idea, as well the report, refers to the fact that so much of what needs to be discussed cannot be discussed in a public inquiry.

How can we have a fulsome discussion about the very issues that are being raised? I am not referring to the broader issues that have been mentioned that we can talk about. This whole thing was about specific cases of foreign interference and we cannot talk about the specifics. Therefore, why do you think a public inquiry, where we cannot talk about the specifics, would be useful?

• (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member should refrain from using the word “you” and address all questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the last point in our motion is to instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to report back to this House, to create recommendations on who should lead the commission and to put forward the terms of reference that need to be included in that study.

Members of this House who have, unfortunately, been subjected to a lot of foreign interference calls should be able to do that in this House. There are ways we can do this safely and securely. That has been proven repeatedly. I do not think there is anything in this motion that sacrifices any of what the member is talking about.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. Before I begin my question, I just want to recognize the birth of one of our newest constituents. Her name is Léonie Angelina Potestio, daughter to Camille Cook and Oliver Potestio. I want to welcome her to this world here, a few days ago.

My hon. colleague talked about human rights and the importance of human rights, and I think we can all agree that democracy is incredibly important, so much so that we should be looking at this in the most serious manner possible. Is my colleague, therefore, on behalf of the NDP, prepared to commit that we either have an inquiry or have an election?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for allowing me to bring forward one of the points that my brilliant colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke raised earlier. We are asking for the government and for a committee of this Parliament to do the work that is necessary. If we were to call an election right now, we would be going in with the exact same rules that we have now and potentially the exact same problems that we have now. Therefore, if we are able to come together to do the work necessary to ensure our institutions are protected and those democratic processes are protected, then we can have the faith of Canadians in this place to go forward with an election free from interference.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to read from an open letter written by Eric Montigny, professor of political science at Laval University, published in today's *La Presse*:

[The Prime Minister] has mastered the art of stalling for time. When controversy tarnishes his government, he usually resorts to the same strategy: first, play down the scope of the scandal and then sit tight while the storm blows over. That is what he is again trying to do in the matter of Chinese interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections.

The political science professor goes on to say—

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to interrupt the member. I believe there is a problem with the interpretation.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I apologize for interrupting my hon. colleague, but I do not believe we have English translation at this time.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are going to check on that. Is it working now?

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, it is working. It has been working for me the whole time, so I wonder if the member just has a problem with his hearing piece.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It seems to be working now.

I remind the hon. member for Mirabel that he has only one minute to speak, so I would ask him to ask his question in 30 seconds.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on a point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I just want to make sure that my colleague is going to repeat his intervention from the start and that he will be given the same amount of time he had before my colleague's point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There was one minute and 25 seconds of speaking time overall. I forgot to tell the member that he only had enough time to ask a brief question. I would ask the member for Mirabel to ask a brief question because time is running out. The member can begin his intervention from the start, even though he was almost finished.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on a point of order.

• (1705)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I understand that he had almost finished his speech, but there was a problem with the interpretation. It has nothing to do with the time he had left or the time he was given. The Chair did not indicate that he had to ask a brief question at the beginning. Regardless of how much time had been used, when there is a problem with the interpretation, the member has to start from the beginning, period.

We are not going to argue about the Official Languages Act.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): What I just told the hon. member is that he had one minute and 25 seconds for the question and the answer. There is one minute and two seconds left, but the hon. member may start again. I will let him do that, but I will simply advise him that he has to try to finish his question. I will let him ask his question, but he cannot go over a minute. He would not have had more than a minute of speaking time in total.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): No, the matter is closed.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, Laval University professor Eric Montigny is calling for a public inquiry today in an open letter.

He states that “holding a public inquiry into foreign interference must first be seen as an exercise in protecting Canadians' confidence in Canadian democracy.”

What the Liberals are doing today, in pointing the finger at the Bloc Québécois, the Conservative Party and the NDP instead of recognizing the need for a public inquiry, is further undermining public confidence in Canadian democracy.

Does my colleague not think that the Liberals' attitude today is highly irresponsible and that they should take the high road in this debate and recognize that we must launch a public inquiry to restore public confidence?

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, I think that the majority of my speech today, and I hope that this was recognized, was about us all coming together, doing what is best for democracy, putting that first above all the bickering and squabbling, and delivering what Canadians have asked for and what the will of this Parliament has asked for.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All of that took less than one minute.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak on an NDP opposition day motion.

I am a little disappointed that this is what we have to do at this point. It is something that matters greatly to me. I am a member of the procedure and House affairs committee, and we have been working very hard and diligently for quite a while on the issue of foreign interference in our Canadian elections.

Here we are today, discussing this yet again. Hopefully we are going to get to a place where we really do what I think is fundamentally the most important, which is assure Canadians that our democracy is being cared for and that we should have trust in those systems that provide us with the ability to allow people to govern and be our voice for every region across Canada.

Business of Supply

Today the NDP is asking for a few things. The first is that the independent special rapporteur, the Right Honourable David Johnston, step aside. I do not take this lightly. This is an unfortunate situation that we are in, and when I listen to some of the discussion and debate in this House, it is amplifying the reason that I think this is so important. The discussion is becoming about whether or not this human being is a good person or not a good person, when, really, the focus should be on whether Canadians have trust in our democratic institutions. Are they concerned and how do we address that in a meaningful way that makes Canadians feel heard and that feels transparent and accountable to them?

At this point, we are simply not in that position. In fact, the special rapporteur has lost that confidence across this country. We could blame the Conservatives for it. I have heard the Liberals do that. They have said it is the Conservatives' fault. We could spend a lot of time having that discussion. I hope we get to the next step of the conversation, which is our duty is to Canadians, and how we make sure that this process that happens assures Canadians to have faith in our systems.

Perception matters, and I think all of us know that. This really addresses this, it says there is a perception, we need to deal with it, and we need to make sure that we have a process that is accountable.

The second part of this is that the government launch a public inquiry into election interference by foreign governments. There are multiple countries of concern. I heard a question earlier today from a Liberal member who said this was a public inquiry and a lot of this was top secret information, and that we should not have a public inquiry because of this. There is a very long list of very important issues that were dealt with where there were aspects of those issues that were held in confidence. However, again, the process was clear enough that Canadians had trust that the people doing the work and seeing the information would report back to them in a way that they could have confidence and faith in.

We are also asking that the commissioner of the public inquiry be selected by all parties. One of the things that concerns me, it has concerned me in this House and it concerns me at the committee where we are studying foreign interference, is that these issues are becoming increasingly partisan. It is very unfortunate that we hear the Conservative leader keep talking about how everything is broken. I know Canadians. There are hard things that we are struggling with right now, but Canadians are not broken.

It is not us that make this country. It is Canadians, collectively, who make this country. There may be things that we do not like. There may be things that we are really concerned about, but I do not believe, in any way, that the Canadians of this country are broken.

We need to have a place where this is not partisan. That means we actually have to do the hard work of bringing in the agreement of all parties. I am willing to do that work, and I am certainly hoping that other members in this place are as well.

The next part is that the report on the public inquiry be tabled in this House before the next election. I have heard from the Conservatives "Let us bring it all down," while we are debating whether it

is safe to have an election or not. I do not know what is going to happen. At any point the Liberal government could make the decision to have an election. It has done it before. Other governments have done it prior to this.

We have to make sure that people have faith in these institutions so that when we do have elections, people feel they could go out and have their voices heard. We need to make sure that our processes are as safe as possible. The reality is, and I think we all know this, what is happening in terms of foreign interference in elections is changing. It is changing very rapidly, and we are having to respond to it at an accelerated pace. We need those processes in place to deal with this ever-changing issue, because if we do not, we are betraying the trust of Canadians.

• (1710)

It also calls on PROC to report to the House the terms of reference and a possible commissioner or a list of commissioners. I think that is great work for the committee to do, and we have to get focused on creating non-partisan solutions.

Democracy is more important than ever, especially when we are looking at the changing realities of this planet. It is a changing world, where we are seeing so much more misinformation. We are seeing an increase of divisive dialogue that is really bringing about a further distrust of our systems.

Collectively, we need to do things in this House that pull Canadians together, that bring them together. We need to say that we are going to focus on the outcome, which is making sure that our elections are safe and that, when there is foreign interference, our methods are accountable and transparent. This is what we need to do.

We are asking every party in this place to take that leadership. That is what we need to see. Canadians need to see collective leadership, a focus on bringing us together and creating solutions. I believe that this can be done only through a public inquiry.

Mr. Johnston wrote in his report that he could not support the idea of a recommendation around a public inquiry. I think that is really unfortunate and, at this point, there is so much concern about his capacity to do this job, regardless of who has made Canadians feel that way, that we have to bring this forward.

Today, in committee, Mr. Stanton, former executive manager of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and Mr. Wilczynski, former assistant deputy minister and director general of intelligence operations at the Communications Security Establishment, spoke about this issue. They said that they believe, fundamentally, that there needs to be a public inquiry. Mr. Stanton even said that if we had asked him a couple of months ago, he would have said there did not need to be one. However, at this point, the way this has happened, it is in a place where there absolutely needs to be an inquiry. I focus on their intentions and their expertise, and I think we also need to focus on that.

Business of Supply

The trust that Canadians have in our democratic institutions matters. It should matter more than our partisan rhetoric. It should matter more than anything. Hopefully, people will take this seriously in this place and understand that, until we take this out of political partisanship, we are just in a place where we are debating opinions on things that are drip-dropping through the system, through the media. They are unclear. There is not enough information provided for clarity, and it makes Canadians not feel trust.

We have been studying this issue. I have heard very clearly that one of the things we need to do is update our legislation. We need a higher level of accountability, particularly in the role of the national security and intelligence advisory. What we heard, which was in that report as well, was that information was shared with different ministries; however, nobody knew how to open the email, so nothing got dealt with. We need more accountability, so things do not get lost.

It was quite shocking to read in Mr. Johnston's report that somebody may be sick one day, and they do not bring the binder to the appropriate person. That cannot be our system. Our system cannot hope that somebody knows a password or that somebody remembers to bring a binder. This is serious. This is about national security. It is about foreign interference in our elections.

We need a better system to let MPs know if they are being targeted by a foreign entity. We have had two points of privilege now that are talking about this information. What we know is that the system is simply not working, and we need to see that fixed.

We need to focus on diaspora communities. They need more protection. We have been hearing in committee about people who are being targeted by authoritarian governments across the planet, people who have families in different countries and people who are from those communities. They are going to their local police and RCMP and saying, "Please help. I am very concerned about this. This is what is happening to me."

Unfortunately, we do not have anything strong enough to support those folks as they go through that situation. Often, they have a file number, but nobody ever gets back to them. That tells us the system is broken. It is not working. Canada is not broken. The people of Canada are not broken, but we do have systems with significant challenges that we need to address.

We can also look at things like disinformation. We know, for example, from a part of the world that I have been watching, which is Finland, that there is a lot of education on disinformation. This is not only in elementary school, middle school and high school but also into college and university. Even if someone is learning to be a carpenter, they are also learning how to develop a critical mind and understand disinformation. They have kids making fake videos so they can show just how realistic they look.

• (1715)

There are some amazing things out there that could really provide guidance for us. This is why we have put forward this motion. It is because we care about Canada. We care about the systems, and we care that Canadians have trust in our democratic institutions. I hope everybody will support this. It is certainly time for that to happen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my comments earlier I made reference to the Ottawa bubble, and I really do believe there is an Ottawa bubble on this particular situation. We had our constituency week last week. The Prime Minister was in Winnipeg and did a town hall. Hundreds of people showed up for it, and no one is talking about this in the community. Canadians are concerned about a wide variety of other issues.

This specific issue has been there for over 10 years. It is only in the last couple of years we have seen more attention being given to it. There are other mechanisms. I am wondering if the member can provide the sort of feedback she is getting from her constituents on the priority of issues.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I do not often say this, but I will thank the member for his question. I actually think it was somewhat thoughtful. There are numerous constituents who really do care about this issue. It is absolutely true. I live in a part of the world where there are a lot of folks who are fighting for this because we have weather stations that tell people who are either on the water or flying if it is safe to do so, and a lot of them are not working. Because of this, there is a greater increase of risk for them and for the well-being of their business, so we are definitely working on things like that.

Housing is a big issue, as is the opioid overdose crisis. All of these things are really important, but it does not mean this is not also important, because people need to trust in our systems and we are seeing it is broken. As parliamentarians, our job is to identify where the problem is and provide a solution. I am hoping we get out of the partisan rhetoric and really get into dealing with this issue in a way that is mindful. I hope the colleague will join us in that.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for joining us in calling for a public inquiry. I agree with her that this has nothing to do with Mr. Johnston's qualifications or his exemplary service to Canadians over many years. This has to do with the Prime Minister and Mr. Johnston walking into a huge conflict of interest scandal around the whole issue of foreign interference in our elections.

I mention to this member that the Prime Minister will continue to breach ethics rules and guidelines. He will continue to walk into conflicts of interest as long as the NDP sustains this common-law marriage with the Liberal Party. It is only when the NDP will finally pull the plug that we will actually be able to see Canadians have an opportunity to hold the government accountable. I would ask the member when—

Business of Supply

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate this member has a perspective. I do not share that perspective. When it comes to being very concerned about the leadership of the Liberal government, I share a lot of concerns. Part of the work I do is really to make the lives of Canadians better, and I take that really seriously.

When I think about the people who come to my office and talk about the challenges they are facing, it makes me frustrated, so I have a responsibility to make sure every step I take I am as accountable as I can be to my constituents. However, I also focus on what I said I would put forward and make sure it gets done. When I think of things like dental care, moving forward with pharmacare and dealing with things that matter to Canadians, such as making life more affordable and making sure they have a bit more money in their pockets, I will fight every day for that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech. I am a person who favours consensus and I completely agree with her that we must encourage positivity. I endorse that way of thinking.

I am just wondering about how long it took for my NDP colleagues to react to this appointment. We have been speaking out against it for weeks because it caught our attention right from the start, while they are only responding today. That is surprising.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, what I was waiting for was the Right Honourable David Johnston to do his job, but what happened to the process was that we just saw more and more issues come forward. To me, this is not about partisan politics; it is about the fact that Canadians have lost faith. I do not know that Canadians had lost faith with him in the beginning, so we allowed him to do his process. Unfortunately, we have gotten to a place where we have heard people on either side blaming about who did what, but the reality is that we are not seeing the work that we need to.

In the media, I actually said that we would wait to see what the report brought forward, as I believed in it very clearly. If we had any concerns at that point, we would continue the work that we felt was important, which was toward a public inquiry. It was our leader who asked for it first. It was our party that brought forward the motion.

The committee will continue this work until the work is done.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always great to rise in this most honourable institution, in the House, and speak to a very important issue today, the New Democratic Party's opposition motion.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for London West. I look forward to hearing her remarks as well.

[Translation]

Everyone knows that Canada is recognized internationally for the strength and stability of its democratic system and institutions. In addition, the majority of Canadians say they are satisfied with how our democracy works. It goes without saying that we have good reason to be proud of the trust Canadians have in their institutions.

Indeed, as the independent special rapporteur on foreign interference reminded us in the very first line of the report released last week, democracy is built on trust. Truer words have never been spoken. Naturally, it is this principle that guides how the government interacts with Canadians, develops policies and sets up programs not only to maintain the state of our democracy, but also to continually improve it.

Nevertheless, we can all agree that democracy is a work in progress requiring our constant attention and that it is under constantly evolving threat. That is why we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. We want to better protect and preserve the trust that Canadians have placed in us, which is why we are continually developing new measures to protect our democratic institutions and respond to emerging issues that seek to weaken them.

One of these measures is the plan to protect Canadian democracy that the Government of Canada implemented ahead of the 2019 federal election and renewed in the lead-up to the 2021 election. I would like to point out that this plan is the first of its kind globally. It comprises a range of initiatives designed to improve and strengthen Canada's democratic institutions and protect them from threats.

One thing is clear: When Canadians have access to reliable information and are better informed about the tactics employed by foreign and malicious actors, they become our best line of defence in our efforts to safeguard democracy and fight foreign interference. This is one of the fundamental premises of our plan to protect Canadian democracy, and it is why the plan's initiatives include enhancing citizen preparedness through measures such as the critical election incident public protocol.

The protocol is a mechanism for senior public servants to communicate clearly, transparently, and impartially with Canadians during an election in the event of an incident or a series of incidents that threaten the election's integrity. This is one example of an information-sharing success story. The protocol serves as a bridge between the expert panel, which is composed of independent, professional senior government officials, and the national security agencies represented on the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force.

Business of Supply

As we know, during the last two federal elections, the expert panel did not detect any incidents that might have threatened Canada's ability to have free and fair elections. I would like to reiterate that this does not mean that there were no attempts at foreign interference or incidents of foreign interference. In fact, the experts made it clear that there is always a certain level of foreign interference. What it actually means is that Canadians can be certain that the outcome of these elections was determined by them and them alone. As the independent special rapporteur points out, there is therefore no call to doubt the results.

● (1725)

In addition, several independent assessments have demonstrated the usefulness of this protocol, and that includes the assessments of the implementation of the protocol that were carried out after the 2019 and 2021 general elections. Both assessments assured Canadians that the protocol should remain in place. They also suggested areas for improvement, which we take very seriously.

For example, significant updates were made to the protocol following the 2019 election report. The government is currently reviewing all the recommendations published last February following the 2019 elections. Members will recall that this is what the government committed to in its April 6 report aimed at providing an update on the recommendations for preventing foreign interference in our democratic institutions.

More recently, the independent special rapporteur also said that the mechanisms that protected the 2019 and 2021 elections were sophisticated. It seems quite clear to us that the protocol is one of these mechanisms. He also affirmed that the measures taken to date have countered the threats of foreign interference and minimized their impact on Canadian democracy.

These independent assessments have given Canadians the assurance that these measures help protect our elections from all types of threats. That is why we relied on these measures to protect the byelections currently taking place in four ridings across the country from any form of foreign interference. On May 16, the government announced that the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force would increase its monitoring of foreign interference threats during the current byelection period.

Our efforts do not stop there. The government recognizes that Canadians want more information about threats to our democratic institutions. Accordingly, after election day, the task force will produce a report that will include its assessment of any foreign interference it detects during the byelections.

As I am sure my colleagues will agree, these measures address the needs and priorities of Canadians. They also reflect our vision. Just because Canada's democracy is one of the strongest and most stable in the world, it does not mean we should not always strive to do better. That is what Canadians expect and what they deserve.

My intervention today focused on certain elements of the plan to protect Canadian democracy. It goes without saying that these are just a few of the measures implemented by the government to protect our democratic institutions from all types of threats. However, I hope to have clearly demonstrated the government's commitment to

strengthening Canada's democracy, responding to Canadians' concerns and continuing our efforts in that regard.

The independent special rapporteur submitted his report to us last week. He pointed out improvements made to information sharing. The government has implemented measures to help address this issue and is working to create others. By the end of October, we will receive his second report, which will include a set of recommendations primarily aimed at ensuring that malicious foreign states cannot jeopardize our democratic institutions.

As I mentioned, members will understand that the government is looking forward to the release of this independent report. I am convinced that the strategic recommendations in that report will enable us to continue to improve how we protect our democracy.

● (1730)

I invite Canadians who wish to be heard to participate in the public hearings that will be held soon by the special rapporteur. Finally, in closing—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time is up, but I am sure he will be able to continue during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could please explain to me his perspective on perception of conflict and conflict. The reality, for me, is that when somebody is perceived a certain way, we have to start focusing on what we want to see out of this. I think what all of us want to see out of this is a process that is accountable and transparent to Canadians so they can trust in our democratic institutions. I am wondering if the member could share his thoughts on that.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for North Island—Powell River for bringing forward this opposition motion. It is obviously important and needs to be debated.

In this situation, in relation to the question that was asked, I would point to former Supreme Court justice Iacobucci. He is very esteemed and held in high regard, and was actually appointed by, I believe, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney a few decades ago. He has led a number of inquiries and has done much work for the federal government. He is someone I hold in an esteemed position. I am glad that he was contacted to provide a letter to say there was no conflict, and we will go with that.

Business of Supply

• (1735)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can understand why the Liberals do not want to have an inquiry. For one thing, what benefits them politically is the status quo. Most of the ridings held by Chinese Canadians went Liberal in the last election, primarily because of threats and because all sorts of things were happening, such as money being funnelled.

I wonder if the member could comment on this. The special rapporteur, in spite of his credentials, is not acceptable to the opposition because of his connections to the Trudeau Foundation and because he is a personal friend of the family. Is it not self-evident that this is not appropriate?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member from British Columbia for the question. It is a very sincere and substantive question.

As I have said in the House repeatedly, I am for a foreign agent registry. That avenue needs to be pursued and is being pursued vigorously by the Minister of Public Safety. I think we need to put that in place with the proper guardrails and due diligence. I also believe that we have committees, NSICOP and NSIRA, that do good work. One of those committees has members of Parliament on it.

We do have institutions in place. We must always maintain confidence in our electoral institutions and in our democracy. We will continue to do so. No matter which government is in power, that must be a priority.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am astounded by the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge's convoluted logic. He started his speech by telling us Canada is known for the quality of its democracy and that people trust it.

Then, he went on for 10 minutes talking about generalities just to end up telling us that we do not need a public inquiry. Basically, what he was saying is that Canadian democracy is like good wine. Since it is good, we can pour some vinegar in it until it spoils.

Then, he had the gall to conclude by saying that we must do better. Can he explain to us why an independent public inquiry, which a majority of members has called for, would not enable us to perhaps do better?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is a very important issue for me. I understand what he is saying.

[*English*]

We as a government put in place a special independent rapporteur, someone who is very distinguished. The independent rapporteur did deliver a report and there is a second report to follow.

At the same time, we as a government must act. We must put in place a foreign agent registry with the proper guardrails, as I stated in my prior answer. We do have committees, NSICOP and NSIRA, that are doing good work, and a number of other initiatives are going forward. We must be sure that Canadians have confidence and trust in their democracy.

We know that the 2019 and 2021 elections were not impacted by foreign interference, as has been ruled in reports. They stated that the outcome was fair and that the outcome was decided only by Canadians.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I rise to address the House of Commons on a matter of the utmost importance: the protection of our democracy and the institutions that uphold it.

Democracies in Canada and around the world are facing a pivotal moment. Malicious foreign-state actors are eager to cast doubt on the strength and integrity of our democratic institutions. Their aim is clear: to erode the trust we maintain in our democratic institutions and weaken the very essence of our democracy.

Fortunately, despite being challenged, Canada's electoral systems stand strong, and reports continue to demonstrate that we rank among the world's healthiest democracies, yet we cannot afford to be complacent. We must confront the evolving threats to our democracy and guarantee that our infrastructures remain robust and impervious to attack. More importantly, we must continue to deliver on our promises of protecting Canada's democracy through clear and ongoing concrete actions.

This is precisely what the government has done and continues to do. We have led the way among our international partners by spearheading the implementation of the plan to protect Canada's democracy. This plan represents a government-wide strategy comprised of four key pillars: enhancing citizen preparedness, improving organizational readiness, combatting foreign interference and building a healthy information ecosystem.

Following a series of independent assessments reaffirming the utility and relevance of the four pillars, the plan was renewed again in 2021, helping to protect our electoral system against the evolving threats of the landscape. As an integral component of our comprehensive strategy, we introduced the critical election incident public protocol, a framework that aims to outline the steps by which an independent and non-partisan panel would notify Canadians of any incident that may jeopardize the integrity of elections, and established the security and intelligence threats to elections, SITE, task force to support the work of this panel.

Private Members' Business

To ensure accountability to Canadians we included a mandatory provision for an independent evaluation of the mechanism in addressing election threats, and this serves as a critical measure in maintaining public trust in the panel's ability to safeguard our democratic process during the caretaker period, that is, during a federal general election. The reviews, but more importantly the insights they yield, ensure we remain focused on continually improving our systems.

Independent panel leaders were provided with access to a wide range of materials that included classified and unclassified documents prepared to support the work of the panel, as well as access to interviews with representatives from national security agencies, government officials, security-cleared members of political parties, and of course the members of the panel itself. This access ensured a thorough examination of the relevant information and perspectives essential for a comprehensive evaluation.

These independent reviews have resulted in the publication of two reports. In 2019, the first independent assessment on the critical election incident public protocol was conducted by a former director of CSIS, who found the implementation protocol successful. Similarly, in the 2021 general election, the independent assessment of the protocol was undertaken by a former federal deputy minister and the governments of differing partisan stripes. The assessments found that elements of the protocol worked well and recommended suggested improvements.

We know that democracy is not a static entity; it requires our constant attention, particularly as threats continue to evolve. For this reason, as allegations of Chinese interference in Canadian elections flooded media cycles on March 6, the Prime Minister tasked the minister responsible for democratic institutions with developing a plan within 30 days to address any outstanding recommendations stemming from the 2019 and 2021 assessments.

The Prime Minister also called for additional reviews on these matters to further uphold confidence in our democratic institutions by both the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. These findings and recommendations will be reported to Parliament in due course.

The robust accountability mechanisms the government has put into place are not just about accountability, but about continuing to improve. Just as the threat to our democracy continues to evolve, so too must our efforts in assessing how we are doing along the way and what is the best way to ensure that we continue to improve.

• (1740)

[Translation]

The Prime Minister also announced the appointment of a former governor general, the Right Hon. David Johnston, as special independent rapporteur on foreign interference, with a broad mandate to make expert recommendations on building trust in our democracy. On May 22—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize, but it being 5:44 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

The question is on the motion.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1745)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP would ask for a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 31, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:59 so we can begin Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:59 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

COPYRIGHT ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance and repair), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 31, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, two weeks ago, I had an opportunity to ask the government about whether the carbon tax causes food inflation. The point of my question was that, all throughout the food chain, the carbon tax is charged. Farmers will pay a carbon tax. In fact, by 2030, the average farmer will pay \$150,000 per year in carbon tax, and they get absolutely no rebate on that. Of course, the cost of that carbon tax is therefore passed on to consumers.

However, it is worse, because the truck operator who comes to pick up the farm product from the farm to take it to a processor pays a carbon tax. The processor is then going to pay a carbon tax on the heat or the air conditioning or the operation of their machinery. The truck operator who picks it up from the processor is going to pay a carbon tax. When it gets to the grocery store, the grocery store owner is going to pay carbon tax because of heating, cooling, etc. Therefore, in the end, the people who suffer are Canadians who are trying to feed their families. What we know unequivocally is that food inflation is causing Canadian families to go hungry. One in five Canadians is skipping meals to make ends meet.

In my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, in the town of Orangeville, I look at seniors' usage of the food bank. We can think of this: Seniors who have worked their entire lives are now resorting to going to the food bank to be able to eat, because the carbon tax has so driven up the cost of food that they can no longer afford to feed themselves. The use of food banks is up over 80% in the town of Orangeville. These are the statistics from the food bank itself. All I have been asking the government to do is to admit that carbon tax is causing food inflation.

It gets worse. The CFIB has now stated that, in 2023 alone, the carbon tax is going to cost small business owners \$8 billion. What they will get back in rebates is a mere \$35 million. Many of these small business owners are also in the food industry. They own our small restaurants. They own our small grocery stores. They are also getting pounded with carbon tax. All these things drive up the cost of food, spurring the crisis in affordability. Seniors are using the food bank; one in five Canadians is skipping meals.

It is a very simple question. I have asked it many times. I say this with all seriousness: Confession is good for the soul. Why will the government not just admit that the carbon tax is causing food inflation?

• (1750)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians know that climate change is real and that it is an urgent threat that requires significant, decisive action. We see the 1,600 fires that are burning across Canada. Canadians are being evacuated from their homes in Halifax, and the opposition just does not take climate change seriously.

I would like to emphasize that Canada has a strong climate plan to address the issue I have just described. Last year, we released the 2030 emissions reduction plan. This plan describes in detail the many actions we are taking to support the global efforts to combat climate change and to meet Canada's 2030 emissions reduction target. Carbon pricing is central to our plan, because it is effective and costs less than any other climate policy. Canadians want the government to act, and carbon pricing is the most affordable way to do it.

The federal approach to carbon pricing puts money back in the pockets of Canadians. In fact, most households come out ahead. Low-income households, in particular, do much better. The average household receives more in climate action incentive payments than it faces in direct costs because of carbon pricing. This has been confirmed repeatedly in independent studies.

Let us not be nearsighted. Climate change is a global challenge, and the costs of inaction are high. Canadians want climate action. The government owes it to them to be responsible and use the policies that are the most efficient and cost-effective. Our approach ensures that Canadians are well placed to benefit from the opportunities created by the global transition that is under way. Pricing carbon pollution, as well as returning the proceeds to Canadian families and businesses, is an effective and affordable way to combat climate change while supporting the sustainability of Canadian communities.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, if he means the carbon tax is effective by driving people into food poverty, I am going to agree with the member because that is what is happening.

If it is effective to stop forest fires that he alleges are as a result of climate change, why do we have the fires? At what level of carbon tax will the forest fires stop?

Adjournment Proceedings

Every time there is any kind of a weather incident, whether it is too much rain, too little rain, too hot or too cold, the Liberal government trots out the spectre that this is all as a result of climate change, as if none of these things ever happened before in the history of the planet. What makes matters worse is, why has the carbon tax not stopped it? It absolutely has not, because it is not a climate plan. It is a tax plan.

Why do the Liberals not finally admit that it is a tax plan, it is causing food inflation and it is impoverishing Canadians so that they have to go to the food bank?

• (1755)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, every time we put forward an affordability measure, dental support, rental support, the Canada child benefit or a middle-class tax cut, the Conservatives vote

against it. They are incredibly hypocritical when it comes to the affordability challenges of Canadians.

Just in closing, evidence confirms that putting a price on carbon pollution works. It spurs clean growth, supports jobs and cuts the pollution causing climate change. The federal carbon pollution pricing system is not about raising revenues. It is about recognizing that pollution has a cost, empowering Canadians and encouraging cleaner growth and a more sustainable future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:55 p.m.)

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