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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 31, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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VETERANS' WEEK

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker and colleagues, as we approach Veterans' Week and Remembrance Day, I stand before the House a very grateful Canadian. We come together to recognize the remarkable Canadians who have served and proudly worn the maple leaf on their shoulders, including some of my colleagues here in this place today. This upcoming week is not only an opportunity to commemorate their sacrifice, but a chance for all Canadians, young and old, to reflect on the freedoms and rights we enjoy today thanks to the service of these brave individuals.

[*Translation*]

Every year, especially in November, people across the country gather to pay tribute to those who have served or are still serving Canada. From the hills of Beaumont-Hamel to the Persian Gulf and the skies above it, from the mountains of Afghanistan to places right here at home, our veterans have demonstrated unwavering courage and resilience. Their stories remind us of their strength and the profound impact of their service.

[*English*]

This week, as we close Women's History Month, I am thinking of women veterans and what so many of them have had to overcome in the service of our country. Over the past year, I have had the privilege to meet many of these women, who have shared mo-

ments with me of their time in the military. They have shared stories of pride in service, of hardship and of how they fought and continue to fight through it all.

Although women only began to serve in combat roles during the Persian Gulf War, the legacy of their service to Canada is much longer: as nursing sisters during the First World War, as decoders and "Wrens" during the Second World War, and, to fast-forward to today, as captains leading combat missions, flying squadrons and even leading the entire forces as the chief of the defence staff. I encourage all Canadians to learn more about them.

This year also marks the 60th anniversary of Canadian peacekeepers joining the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus, and the 50th anniversary of the 1974 war, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. As we mark this anniversary, I am thinking of the group of veterans who are preparing to return to Cyprus to rekindle memories with their fellow service members and to share this history with Canadians. I am reflecting on the service of the 36,000 Canadians who participated in Operation Snowgoose, and those who remain there today in what is one of Canada's longest overseas military commitments.

Many veterans continue to live with physical and psychological scarring from their time in Cyprus and in other operations around the world. We cannot ignore the heavy toll service takes on the men and women, and also their families, who sign up to serve no matter the risk. This Veterans' Week, I ask each of us to pause and reflect on what service means to us.

[*Translation*]

This Veterans' Week, I encourage all Canadians to participate in local activities, volunteer their time and reach out to veterans in their community. Simple acts of kindness, such as a conversation, a shared meal or even a friendly ear, can go a long way.

[*English*]

We have a collective responsibility to educate future generations about RCMP and CAF veterans and their families. By sharing the stories of those who served and what they gained from their experiences, we foster gratitude, pass on history and, most importantly, leave them with lessons that have endured for more than 100 years. As the air force motto says, "Through adversity to the stars".

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

Let us also take the time to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of equity-deserving veterans, such as indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ veterans, as well as those of people who have served in non-combat roles. I have met so many veterans from these groups over the past year, and all of them are very proud of their military careers and their contributions to maintaining peace and security around the world.

[English]

This Veterans' Week, let us be united in a common goal to be there for veterans and their family members. Above all, let us make sure they know and that Canadians know how much we value their service and contributions to our country. Together, we will never, ever forget their sacrifices.

[Translation]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, along with a full delegation of Canadians, recently visited Normandy, France, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. I had the honour of standing on Juno Beach with some of the heroes who stormed that beach on June 6, 1944. They were the heroes who saved the world.

● (1010)

[English]

Those brave young Canadians who stormed the beaches of Normandy 80 years ago were the greatest generation. One of those heroes was 102-year-old Charles Davis of Windsor, Ontario, who arrived in Normandy on D-Day plus four and was part of the campaign inland as Canadians and our allies liberated Normandy from the Nazi invaders.

Canada is home to many such heroes, heroes who endured conditions unimaginable to most of us. They are heroes like Samuel Sharpe, then a Conservative member of Parliament who rose up a battalion from his riding and led them in Europe during the First World War. They are heroes like Lloyd Hamilton, a Métis soldier who once acted to save 80 Korean children from an orphanage during the Korean War. They are heroes like Nicole Langlois, who was part of the first deployment of female soldiers in a frontline role. They are heroes like Rick Mohr, whose surviving family was the first to receive a Memorial Cross awarded to a Persian Gulf veteran related to illness linked to his service. They are heroes like Jess Larochelle, whose courage while severely wounded in Afghanistan saved many of his fellow soldiers. Although awarded the Star of Military Valour, Jess tragically left us last year before ever seeing his government recognize him with the Victoria Cross that many feel he deserved.

They are heroes like the 66,000 Canadians who laid down their lives during the First World War. They are heroes like the 44,000 who made the ultimate sacrifice in the Second World War, the 516 who gave their lives in Korea and the 158 Canadian Armed Forces members who lost their lives in Afghanistan.

Let us never forget that these are not just numbers or statistics. They represent real people who laid down their lives for our free-

doms. They were young men and women who had hopes and dreams that will forever go unrealized.

[Translation]

They did it for all of us, so that we could continue to live in freedom. They did it voluntarily, in the ultimate act of courage and sacrifice. It is a debt we can never repay.

[English]

In much the same way, there is never enough that we can do or say to thank those who served the country and came back forever changed. Whether their injuries are physical or psychological, they leave deep scars, often having a lasting impact on their relationships, on their families and on their futures. We owe it to them to ensure that what they fought for is never taken for granted.

[Translation]

We pay tribute to their loyal service and sacrifice. It is a great honour for me to be here today to express to them, on behalf of the leader of the official opposition, all common-sense Conservatives and all Canadians, our gratitude, our admiration and our deep respect, and to promise them that we will always be there for them, as they have been there for us.

[English]

My wife Carmen and I recently welcomed our little baby daughter Jade into the world, and when I think about the Canada that I want her to grow up in, it is one where we have heroes like Charles, Samuel, Lloyd, Nicole, Rick and Jess defending our freedoms and values. It is the Canada that tens of thousands who made the ultimate sacrifice gave their lives for. It is the one where those heroes and their families get the respect and appreciation they deserve, because the freedom for which they spilled their blood, the democracy for which they suffered and the sovereignty for which they died are not the property of this generation to surrender.

Let us all teach our children, as we will teach Jade, about these heroes and their bravery, about the constant battle of good versus evil, about freedom over tyranny. If we ask those veterans to tell us the single most important thing we could do to repay them, I know they would all say the same thing: to never take for granted that which they fought for, our freedoms.

Please join me and my colleagues, Canada's common-sense Conservatives, in making that commitment today. We pledge to uphold those freedoms. It is how we will honour their memories, thank them for their service and show our respect for their sacrifice. Freedom came at all costs, and at all costs we must ensure it is maintained.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

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[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for granting me the right to speak, which I consider extremely important, especially in light of the current international situation. Today's global geopolitical climate is fraught with tension among the major nations of our planet, among our major powers, and various conflicts are unfolding on a global scale.

War is not limited to the 1914-18 war, the 1939-45 war or the Korean War. It encompasses a host of conflicts that are making headlines in our daily newspapers and opening our eyes to concerns of global or planetary proportions. In this context, the significance of November 11, Armistice Day, becomes very real. As I see it, this day carries an even more important and powerful message about the need to educate the younger generations about the consequences of war and the importance of peace.

Remembrance Day is a time to commemorate the victorious end of World War I, but above all to remind ourselves of the value of peace. Over the years, the day has also become an opportunity to show our immense gratitude to those who manned the front to defend our liberty, our democracy and our peace, and who paid the ultimate price, sacrificing body, mind and soul.

We must also pause to acknowledge and thank veterans of all wars, not only the two world wars and the Korean War. I am referring to the operations in Cyprus, the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the war in Afghanistan, not to mention the Somme, Pas-de-Calais, Vimy, Dieppe, Hill 355, Sarajevo, Kabul, I could go on.

In all of these battles, soldiers from Quebec fought under the Canadian flag. Women and men exhibited unstinting bravery and dedication in some of the most difficult and complex circumstances imaginable. The sacrifices these military personnel made earn them equal recognition to those who fought in other major wars, by which I mean the First World War of 1914 to 1918, the Second World War of 1939 to 1945 and the Korean War.

In fact, for a Quebec sovereigntist such as myself, this commemoration uniting 54 countries of the British Commonwealth is a chance to recall that our national project builds on the values defended by these heroes and on the ironclad solidarity we maintain with our historical allies. We have countless reasons to be proud of their acts of bravery. I think it is essential and our duty to promote the values of reconciliation and solidarity.

Wearing the poppy over the heart from the beginning of Veterans' Week until Remembrance Day may be a small gesture, but the symbolism behind it could not be larger. In doing so we proudly recognize the value of peace and recall the sacrifices they made for us and for our democracy.

This great ritual dates back to the armistice of 1918, with the cessation of hostilities on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month marking the end of 1,651 days of total war that left over nine million dead and unaccounted for. More recently, the ritual has broadened to include the veterans of all wars. Today I invite all parliamentarians to take a few minutes to reflect on the significance of this day, on the significance of peace and on the consequences of these wars.

We shall remember them.

• (1015)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the NDP critic for Veterans Affairs, I am honoured to work with many veterans, who have served our country bravely and who endure many challenges once they enter civilian life. I want to acknowledge that, as we walk into the week of remembering veterans, I have stood by many graves, both in our country and other countries, and read many of those names. They are the people who made the ultimate sacrifice. One of the most painful moments is when we see those who were not named and we know there is a family that still does not know where their loved one is. Today, in this place, we hold their memory up in remembrance.

Veterans tell me that recognition of their sacrifices, and those of their family members, means so much to them. Therefore, it is my honour today to stand in this place and recognize the Canadians who serve in the military, past, present and future, to remember those who lost their lives in the line of duty and to show respect for those who continue to serve in war, in peace and in protection of our rights and freedoms.

The cost of war is high. There is far too much conflict in our world right now. We continue to send Canadians into danger, be it going on peacekeeping missions, going to areas of international violence or helping at home to fight forest fires and pandemics. It is how we support the military members when they return home after their service that confirms our act of remembrance, our promise to take care of them. This is so important. Canada must stop failing to uphold this promise. Commemoration of military service is not only about building monuments or holding ceremonies on remembrance days. It includes those things, but it also means much more to veterans. Nevertheless, many Canadian veterans do not feel well supported.

Indigenous veterans who fought bravely for Canada in the 20th century were stripped of their status when they returned home, facing poverty, inability to go home to their communities and racist attitudes. They were really dismissed, even though they provided the greatest service to Canada. Today, Canadian indigenous veterans continue to work towards the acknowledgement of that and of their current service. They continue to tell the stories of their heroism and leadership, lifting up a history that Canada has too often forgotten.

In the eighties and nineties, 2SLGBTQ+ veterans were purged from service because of an oppressive policy of heteronormalization. A terrible historical wrong was done to thousands of Canadians, who were victimized solely because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

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Persian Gulf veterans are still fighting for the government to recognize them for having served in a war so that they can receive the same benefits as those who came before them.

I think of the women veterans who fought for their country in equipment that did not fit and suffered horrendous injuries to their body and their reproductive system. They had to endure sexist attacks, with huge impacts on their mental health, as well as verbal and physical attacks from their colleagues and commanders; they had no recourse to justice. Those women are still fighting. This time, they are fighting their government for their rights and benefits. I am so honoured to know them. They are fierce, and they will not stop. That is what bravery looks like.

It is incredibly tragic to consider that women veterans face dangers not just from deployments but also from within the military, because of archaic and sexist attitudes. They were made to feel invisible and were often mistaken for the wives of the military instead of being recognized for their service. I say to the women veterans of Canada that I see them, I hear them and the New Democrats support them. They are no longer invisible.

There are many veterans who need trauma-informed care and support. When they contact Veterans Affairs for help, they are forced to deal with an overly bureaucratic and complex system. They are threatened with removal from programs if deadlines are not met; moreover, they experience multiple denials of service attribution and endless delays in receiving benefits. Sometimes, years go by and veterans receive nothing. My office has helped one such veteran who lived for four years without an income, even though he was entitled to receive one from the government. A member of Parliament should not have to intervene for a veteran to receive his diminished earning capacity pay.

• (1020)

The system of benefits of Veterans Affairs must be transformed to offer services through a lens of trauma-informed care. It is so important that the veterans of this country be recognized.

In closing, I just want to say that it is important to Canadians that veterans are acknowledged and remembered. Let us normalize thanking them, not just during Veterans' Week and Remembrance Day, but each and every time we see a person who is currently serving or has served. That is the very least we can do to acknowledge their service.

Lest we forget.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to add my statement on behalf of the Green Party of Canada. I think we are united in this place, and I echo the words of all my colleagues.

[*Translation*]

I agree with what members of all parties have said this morning. We are all on the same page. We will remember.

[*English*]

We will never forget—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before the hon. member continues, I need to ask for unanimous consent from the House.

The hon. member seeks unanimous consent to give a speech on Veterans' Week. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to my colleagues for granting unanimous consent for me to speak on the subject of Remembrance Day and Veterans' Week.

[*English*]

I want to speak briefly. I certainly echo the words of all my colleagues, particularly the very detailed enumeration of the number of wrongs done to our veterans. I offer a huge thanks to all past members of the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as those currently serving in uniform for Canada, of course.

I just want to reflect very personally. As we gather every November 11 at a cenotaph in our local community, we all notice the missing. As the years go by, there are veterans who are increasingly frail and slip off this mortal coil. In the last year, we lost two such heroes. It was a little more than a year for Charles "Chic" Goodman. In my community of Sydney on Vancouver Island, we know of the heroism of Chic Goodman as one of those Canadian soldiers who helped liberate the Netherlands and who helped liberate people who had been held in Nazi death camps.

We think of Peter Godwin Chance, a hero of many campaigns, who died this year at 103. Every year, including November 11, 2023, he stood unaided, making his way to the cenotaph while carrying a wreath. As we think of these veterans, we remember members of our own family. My husband's father, Kendal Kidder served in North Africa, Sicily and Italy; he was in command of one of the landing crafts at Normandy on D-Day. My closest friend, Farley Mowat, served in Italy.

We used to be able to hear the stories of these people and hear what it was like for them. In many cases, they were not young men as soldiers; they were boys. I think of the words of Joyce Meyer, who said, "Courage...is fear that has said its prayers and decided to go forward anyway".

There was tremendous courage, but there were also very young men, boys really. In every war, they go forward and they die. We must do everything we can to recommit ourselves to respecting their service, to ensuring their care, to ensuring that they know our gratitude and to ensuring that we cease sending young people into war. I know the word “fight” might not sound right in this context, but we must fight for peace.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

We will never forget. As Canadians, we will always work to protect peace.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On behalf of us all, I would like to add that it is very important to recognize Veterans' Week.

[*English*]

There are many military personnel, brave men and women who have served our country; let us not forget the people at DND, as well as the legion members, who do so much during Veterans' Week to raise awareness about this. I just also want to thank the ones in my area of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, who do so much, as well as those throughout Canada.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I move that the second report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, presented on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, be concurred in.

Today, I am starting off the debate on the report on medical assistance in dying that was presented in February 2023. It is entitled “Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada: Choices for Canadians” and was presented by the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, which was struck in May 2021. The report was presented a year and a half ago. I am bringing this debate back to the House because, as reported in the news, Quebec began authorizing advance requests for people with degenerative and incapacitating diseases yesterday. The answers the Prime Minister gave us yesterday suggest to me that he does not understand the issues at all and has not given them any thought since May 2021. That is unacceptable to people who are suffering.

Today, I would like to take a moment to remember all those we have lost, as well as those who are currently disappearing into the abyss of dementia. They are slowly but surely and irreversibly becoming prisoners of time, of each moment that fades away as it is lived. The present moment is gradually erasing the people they once were, and they are losing contact with the things that gave their existence meaning, things like joy, sorrow, the ability to have relate to others and share their experiences, consciousness, and the ability to make others happy and plan for the future. This terrible

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disease is robbing them of all the things that make life what it is, that make up the experience of life, the human experience, until their life is reduced to a mere biological process. They are irreversibly losing their physical, social, mental and moral autonomy, in every sense of the word.

Wherever you are right now, I am thinking about you, Mom.

I am also thinking about Sandra Demontigny, who is suffering from early-onset dementia. She is fighting for patients who have this debilitating, incurable, incapacitating disease to have the right to self-determination. She is fighting for them to have the right to make an advance request for MAID after being diagnosed. People with dementia want to live as long as possible. They do not want to shorten their lives by requesting MAID while they are still mentally competent. They want to be able to receive it once they have become incapacitated, once they have reached their limit. They are seeking assurance that we will have the compassion needed to respect their final wishes. Fortunately, Quebec decided not to wait for the federal government to wake up. It passed a law, which took effect yesterday, that allows people to make an advance request.

I commend Sandra Demontigny for her courage, her determination and her efforts to assert patients' right to self-determination. That is what we are talking about. The principle of lifelong self-determination is enshrined in law. No one can violate a person's integrity. That being the case, why, at the most intimate moment of a person's life, the moment of their death, should the government get to decide what is best for them? I would remind my colleagues that the government's job is not to decide what is best for a patient. The government's job is to create conditions that are conducive to making free and informed choices. People need to be free to make their own choices.

• (1030)

The Liberals champion the freedom to choose when it comes to abortion, when it comes to a woman's right to control her own body, so how they can question a patient's prerogative to exercise their right to self-determination in a decision as personal as that of their own death? The Liberals are dithering and are still hesitant to amend the Criminal Code to make advance requests legal. The Prime Minister said yesterday that it was a deeply personal decision. If he recognizes that, why can he not put some substance behind his statement? I think I have demonstrated that this is indeed a deeply personal decision.

Why shelve the report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying? Why set up joint committees made up of senators and elected representatives, ask them to come up with a key recommendation, and then shelve their report? The committee even managed to convince a Quebec Conservative who agreed with these proposals. The government is finally waking up a year and a half later because it was waiting to see what Quebec would do. The government took a wait-and-see approach so it could see how Quebec would proceed. It was a good idea to look at the example of Quebec, which took a unanimous non-partisan approach. Ottawa could learn something from what happened in Quebec's parliament, which spoke with one voice.

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The government is now refusing to amend the Criminal Code, even though we have made it easy to do so. The government is not the one that has been doing the work since 2021, or for the past year and a half. The Quebec National Assembly passed the Act Respecting End-of-Life Care on June 7, 2023. It is now November 2024, and this government is telling us that it needs to have conversations. Who does the government want to have those conversations with? We heard from many experts, groups and citizens. We received many briefs. Despite all that, the government feels it must continue to wait, wait until people are suffering.

The committee report states the following, and I quote:

...Sandra Demontigny eloquently and movingly shared with the committee the sense of peace that advance requests might provide in situations like hers...

These people can feel more at ease dealing with the challenges before them when they are safe in the knowledge that, once they have reached their limit of suffering, we will take care of them and respect their final wishes. That is what we call basic humanity.

Here is what Sandra Demontigny had to say, and I quote:

I am working to calm my vanishing brain and my troubled heart. I feel a need to be reassured about my future so that I can do a better job of living out my remaining days and coping with the more frequent trials I will be experiencing.

My plan is to make the most of my final years while life is still good, with a free mind and without fear.

If those words fail to strike a chord with members here, those members must be heartless and lacking compassion, perhaps because of sweeping ideological principles that they are not putting on the table.

● (1035)

This prompted the committee to say that the Carter decision needed to be respected. Under Carter, the government must not violate sick people's right to life with legislation that would force them to shorten their lives. We saw this in Carter, and it was reiterated in the Beaudoin decision. These people do not want to commit suicide.

That is what Sandra Demontigny told us. She said that she wanted to make the most of the years she has left, knowing that when she reaches her limit of suffering, she will be taken care of and will not have to go through the same appalling decline as her father. Until that moment comes, she wants to live. She does not want to commit suicide.

Is that clear? Who is more vulnerable than a person making this heartfelt plea?

When people say they want to strike a balance between preserving the autonomy of self-determination and protecting the most vulnerable, unless they have fallen down the rabbit hole of believing that everyone in the health care system is evil, it is impossible not to hear this plea.

Why is the government applying a double standard? This report was tabled in February 2023. The government ignored the key recommendation, but, because Bill C-7 contained a Senate amendment regarding mental disorders and a deadline, the government did accept the committee's recommendation to take another look at the issue after experts had studied it for a year. The government then rec-

ommended waiting, because it does not believe that the entire country is ready for this. It accepted the recommendation and applied it, and the result was Bill C-62. However, in the past year and a half, no bills have been drafted based on the committee's key recommendation on advance requests. If that is not an example of lacking courage and shirking responsibility, I do not know what is.

The minister is unable to understand that an advance request cannot take effect until a diagnosis has been made. It has been six months since the Quebec law was passed. I do not know what world I am living in. This is certainly not a sign of competence. He clearly finds the issue complex because he keeps inventing problems that should not exist.

We are not only criticizing. We went so far as to table a bill. Bill C-390 offers the government a solution, because we are in suggestion mode, not just in opposition mode. This bill allows the provinces to pass their own legislation once they have debated the issue. Quebec has been juggling this issue, reflecting on MAID and doing something about it since 2009. Now, in 2024, it can start accepting advance requests. There is a law in Quebec. We have adopted a legislative framework. If the federal government thinks advance requests are too complicated, maybe it should look at Bill C-390, which says it should go at the provinces' and legislative assemblies' pace. This is a debate that should be undertaken by each legislative assembly, by citizens and their representatives. Once they have debated the issue and established a legislative framework, they will then be able to accept advance requests for MAID. That is a very reasonable suggestion.

● (1040)

This is not preferential treatment for Quebec. It is an additional safeguard for the government. The idea is to amend the Criminal Code to simply say that, once a legislative assembly, a province, has adopted a legislative framework and a law, it can move ahead.

The administration of care is a matter for the provinces. End-of-life care is a matter for the provinces. The Criminal Code is a federal statute, and the federal government does not need to describe how things should be done. Furthermore, we are setting an example for all the other provinces. According to every poll conducted over the past three years, 83% to 85% of Canadians support advance requests, so I have to wonder where the political risk is. I feel like this government is afraid of its own shadow. It lacks the courage of its convictions, assuming it even has any convictions left.

I thought that freedom to choose was a cardinal Liberal Party belief that set it apart from the Conservatives, but no. I can criticize the Conservatives, but I will say one thing about them: We know where they stand and why, so we are able to position ourselves accordingly. As for the Liberals, there is no way of knowing what they think. They are dilettantes.

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How can they be so unconcerned when it comes to an issue like this, an issue of human suffering? What are the Liberals waiting for? I can answer that question. What were the Conservatives waiting for in 2015, when the Carter decision forced Parliament to take a stand and an extension had to be sought? This Parliament has never been able to deal with the MAID issue except under a court injunction. The court had to order the government to change the law and the Criminal Code. Parliament has never taken the lead or even listened to patients and the public. Since 87% to 90% of Quebecers support advance requests, it seems to me we should be moving forward.

Why is there a problem today? There is a problem because the Canadian Medical Protective Association has always said that physicians will be protected so long as they follow the most restrictive law. At certain times, Quebec had the most restrictive law, after the passage of Bill C-7 and Bill C-14. In Canada, there is no law like Quebec's. Quebec applies the Criminal Code and the regulations that explain how to proceed. Quebec ended up having to ensure that people like Ms. Gladu and Mr. Truchon could not access MAID. Bill C-7 would have allowed this, so Quebec had to tweak its law.

I am appealing to people's sense of duty and humanity. I hope that my colleagues will set aside government paternalism and get on the same page as the people of Quebec and Canada. I suggest that the government take Bill C-390 and make it a government bill.

Today, the government is claiming that a national conversation is needed. I thought that forming a special joint committee of senators and members from both chambers in a parliamentary democracy gave those committee members the standing to make recommendations that reflect what the public thinks.

• (1045)

I look forward to seeing what my colleagues have to say during this debate. I invite the government and the Prime Minister to quickly do their homework so they can get up to date on this file, allow advance requests and amend the Criminal Code to harmonize it with what is happening on the ground and eliminate any legal confusion.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand and appreciate that over the years, the Bloc has consistently been pushing the issue in an attempt to move it forward. However, I do believe that the Prime Minister and the government have done a very respectful job at advancing the issue. Part of that advancement is in the consultation we have committed to, which will start in the month of November. Because is a joint responsibility, with both the provinces and the federal government having a role to play, would the member not agree we should in fact be working with the other jurisdictions and with stakeholders before we make a decision?

We know that the subject matter is very complex, and it has been difficult at times for it to even get any attention in the House in order to advance it. There is finally a government that has taken tangible action by working with other jurisdictions and listening to what Canadians want.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I would say it depends on what the government wants. If it wants to sidestep the issue, buy time, or simply call an election and not have to do anything beforehand, then yes, have a national conversation.

Really, all the government has to do is take Bill C-390 and introduce a similar bill. That would allow legislatures to move forward if they are ready. Those that need to debate the issue will debate it and, when they are ready, advance requests will be allowed in those provinces.

I do not understand why the government wants to convince people before the debate even takes place in the provinces. It is not up to one government, whatever its political stripe, to decide for everyone. For example, I would have no issue with this becoming a provincial election issue.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to use my time to heartily congratulate my colleague from Montcalm. He has a level of knowledge and expertise that should make the minister envious. The Bloc Québécois believes that the member for Montcalm understands the issue 100%. He understands it in a much more tangible and practical way than the Minister of Health does, which is a shame.

We are hearing all sorts of things about advance requests that I believe are myths. I agree with my colleague that it is a lack of courage on the government's part that is keeping it from swiftly passing legislation that would allow patients in Quebec to choose when they can die with dignity.

My question is very specific. Is it true that anyone can make an advance request at any time and have it granted? According to the people here, it is a slippery slope and everyone could be granted one easily. This is a myth that is circulating among the opposition members. I think that the member for Montcalm has a good answer for them.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question, which gives me an opportunity to explain that people often confuse advance requests with advance directives.

An advance request is a request for MAID made by a person with a neurodegenerative cognitive disease that is incurable, irreversible and therefore incapacitating. They have to be diagnosed first, though. It is not like signing the back of a health card to consent to being an organ donor.

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If I am 50 years old and I make an advance request for MAID today in case I get Alzheimer's disease, the form will go straight into the trash can. That is because I need to be diagnosed with it first. Once a person has a diagnosis, then they become eligible for care. They are then taken in hand by a care team that sees them through to the end of their journey, as hard as that may be.

• (1055)

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by complimenting and applauding the member for his work. We served on the joint committee together, and I would like to thank him for his contributions.

Indeed, medical assistance in dying is an extremely complex and personal issue. I am wondering whether the member would like to speak to the safeguards that could be in place to protect people on the basis on mental illness.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, my goal this morning was not to reignite the debate on mental disorders. We debated that with Bill C-62. My goal today was to reignite the debate because the government refused to implement the the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying's key recommendation, which was to move forward and accept advance requests. Not only did it refuse to implement the recommendation, but it did not even start thinking about it because it thinks it is too complicated. Only now, after a year and a half, does it want to start talking to people. My goal today is to focus on the issue of advance requests and the Liberal government's inexplicable inertia. The government should be ashamed to have left such an important report to gather dust.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Montcalm not only for his speech, but also for his extensive and truly exemplary work on this issue. I share his impatience and frustration with the Liberal government's inaction.

My question concerns the impact that this has been having on Quebec physicians since yesterday. Quebec physicians are in an impossible situation, caught between Quebec legislation that authorizes advance requests and a Canadian code that prohibits them. The rather distressing situation confronting them at the moment is affecting their decisions and their work.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is absolutely right. Family doctors in Quebec have been providing MAID since the Quebec legislation passed. Right now, given the rule that says that, when there are two different laws, the most restrictive law applies, these doctors are now wondering how they will defend themselves in the event of a civil suit.

The government can say that it will not challenge Bill 11, but doctors know full well that they are not immune from lawsuits. The Attorney General of Canada can issue a directive, but what is a directive really worth in a state governed by the rule of law if the Criminal Code remains unamended? That puts a damper on things.

Every time a new case concerning advance requests comes up, there is always resistance. There is even still resistance in the case of people in the terminal stages of cancer. We can therefore assume that there will be pockets of resistance, with some doctors refusing to offer their patients the option.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question from my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The minister responsible for seniors is the one who led the debate in Quebec. When I spoke to her, she said that her government was obviously going to move forward, but that she thinks that it is a shame that the federal government will not follow suit for the reasons my colleague from Montcalm has just explained: the risks and fears it raises among some doctors.

What message is that sending? How sure can we be if there is a change of government? We know what the Conservatives think about medical aid in dying. What is going to happen with this law and the decisions that will be made in Quebec?

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I mentioned that in my questions to the government this week. I asked if the government was aware of the current political situation. We need to be able to analyze it. The political situation in Canada is that, if an election were triggered tomorrow morning, we would find ourselves with a Conservative government. Conservative governments have always been against all forms of MAID, so the current government is playing Pontius Pilate and washing its hands. It is leaving it up to another government to settle the matter.

That is what I mean when I say they lack political courage. I thought that the Liberals had political courage. I find it odd that they are always throwing abortion in the Conservatives' face. They should be throwing medical aid in dying in the Conservatives' face instead.

• (1100)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I get under way, I would like to comment on the member's last statement. He pointed out the Conservative Party's resistance to the issue. I believe it is Bill C-390 that the Bloc is advocating for and advancing, which attempts to deal with the issue. This is the first time I am hearing it on the floor of the House. I would have thought Bloc members would have raised the issue with the leadership teams in the hope that we might be able to work together on Bill C-390 and, at the very least, how it might be incorporated into some of the consultations.

There is absolutely no doubt this is a very important issue. Since 2015, when the Supreme Court decided on the issue, it has been a hot topic for parliamentarians on all sides of the House. We have seen a great deal of compassion and emotion, and understandably so.

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Before I get into the substance of the report, I want to refer to why we find ourselves again talking about this concurrence report. For issues of the day that are really important to caucus strategies, or the desire to have a public discussion, we have what we call opposition days. We need to contrast concurrence reports, including the one today that the Bloc has brought forward, with opposition day motions that are brought forward. We will find there is a stark difference. The Bloc is not alone. It will bring forward a motion or a concurrence report and say how important it is that we debate it, yet it is never given any attention on opposition days, when not only could the concurrence report be debated, but the opposition day motion could instruct an action of some form or another.

Why are we debating it today? I would suggest it is because of an action taken a number of weeks ago. We need to ask ourselves why there has been no discussion on Bill C-71, the Citizenship Act, which we started the session with. Everyone but the Conservatives supports that act. There is Bill C-66, where sexual abuses taking place within the military could be shifted over to the civil courts. My understanding is that every political party supports that legislation.

There is Bill C-33 regarding rail and marine safety and supply lines, which is very important to Canada's economy. There is Bill C-63, the online harms bill. Last night, members talked about the importance of protecting children from the Internet, and yet the government introduced Bill C-63, the online harms act. We are trying to have debates in the House of Commons on the legislation I just listed. It does not take away from the importance of many other issues, such as the one today regarding MAID. MAID is an important issue, and I know that. We all know that.

• (1105)

Yesterday, a concurrence report on housing was debated. Housing is also a very important issue, I do not question that, but we have well over 100 reports in committees at report stage. If we were to deal with every one of those reports, not only would we not have time for government legislation, but we would not have time for opposition days either, not to mention confidence votes. I am okay with that, as long as we get the budget passed through. We have to ask why we are preventing the House of Commons from being able to do the things that are important to Canadians. That can be easily amplified by looking at the behaviour of the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives will stand up today and talk about MAID, as well they should; I will too. However, there is no doubt that they are happy to talk about that issue today only because it feeds into their desire to prevent the government from having any sort of debate on legislation, let alone attempting to see legislation pass to committee. The Conservative Party is more concerned about its leader and the Conservative Party agenda than the agenda of Canadians and the types of things we could be doing if the official opposition party would, for example, allow its motion to actually come to a vote.

We are debating this concurrence motion because the Conservatives have frustrated the other opposition parties to the degree that we are sick and tired of hearing Conservatives stand up repeatedly, over 100 of them now, on the privilege issue, preventing any and all

types of debate. So, as opposed to listening to Conservatives speak on something that is absolutely useless, we are ensuring that at least there is some debate taking place on important issues, such as MAID and housing.

Members of all political stripes need to realize the games the Conservatives are playing come at great expense to Canadians. The motion of privilege is to send the issue to PROC. Every member in the House supports that except for the Conservatives, yet it is a Conservative motion. They are filibustering and bringing the House to standstill, unless we are prepared to think outside the box and bring in a motion for concurrence. The concurrence motion, no doubt, is better than listening to the Conservatives continue to repeat speeches.

I attempted to address their speeches in great detail weeks ago. It is time we change the channel. It is time the Leader of the Opposition started putting Canadians and the nation's best interests ahead of his own personal interests and the Conservative Party of Canada's interests. We need to start talking about issues that Canadians want to hear about.

I was pleased when the member from the Bloc made reference to indications that the Province of Quebec wants to move forward on this issue. My understanding is that the province is even taking substantial actions towards it. Advance requests for MAID have been on the table and been discussed. We need to recognize it is not only Ottawa that plays a role in regard to MAID and its implementation. Our primary role is with the Criminal Code and how we might be able to make changes to it.

• (1110)

Members, no matter what region they come from, have to appreciate that Canada is a vast country in which there is an obligation to consult with the different provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, community advocates, health care professionals and Canadians. There is an obligation to do that, especially around the type of legislation the member of the Bloc is trying to change.

I was hoping to get a second question from the member, because he made reference to Bill C-390. I am not familiar with its background. It is probably completely related to the advance requests for MAID. The member, in his question to me, could maybe expand on what exactly the bill is proposing. I would ask, in regard to it, to what degree the member has done his homework. Doing the homework means going outside the province of Quebec. All provinces have something to say about the issue. Many people who were born in Quebec live in other jurisdictions, just as many people who were born in other parts of the country now call Quebec home.

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We have an obligation to not take legislation dealing with issues like MAID lightly. Just because one jurisdiction is advancing it more quickly than another jurisdiction, or because one jurisdiction is demanding it, it does not necessarily mean Ottawa can buy into it at the snap of its fingers. That is not to take anything away from Quebec. On a number of fronts, Quebec has led the nation. I could talk about issues like \$10-a-day child care, a national program that the Prime Minister and government, with solid support from the Liberal caucus, have advanced and put into place, and every province has now agreed to it. The MAID file is a good example where Quebec is probably leading, in pushing the envelope, more than any other province, as it did with child care. Other jurisdictions take a look at other aspects.

Health care, today, is a national program that was implemented by a national Liberal government, but the idea that predated it came from Tommy Douglas. Its practical implementation was demonstrated in the province of Saskatchewan. As a government, we continue to support health care in a very real and tangible way. By contrast, we can take a look at the Conservatives on health care and the concerns we have in terms of a threat to health care. We have invested \$198 billion in health care. That ensures future generations can feel comfortable in knowing the federal government will continue to play a strong role in health care. Why is that relevant to the debate today? For many of the individuals who are, ultimately, recipients of MAID, it is an issue of long-term care, hospice care.

When my grandmother passed away in the 1990s, in St. Boniface Hospital, it was a very difficult situation. We would have loved to have had hospice care provided for her, but it did not happen. That does not take anything away from the fantastic work that health care workers provide in our system, but there she sat in a hospital setting, which was was questionable in terms of dying with dignity.

● (1115)

Health care and long-term care matter. With respect to my father's passing, it was Riverview and it was a totally different atmosphere because it provided hospice care. Health care matters when we talk about MAID. What the Government of Canada is bringing forward is recognition that we cannot change things overnight, but at least we are moving forward.

Back in 2015, when the Supreme Court made a decision, former prime minister Stephen Harper did absolutely nothing in terms of dealing with the issue of MAID, and the current leader of the Conservative Party was a major player during that whole Stephen Harper era. It put us into a position where, virtually immediately after the federal election, we had to take action, and we did. I remember vividly when members of Parliament shared stories in Centre Block. I remember the emotions. I remember many of my colleagues sitting on the committee that listened to Canadians from across the country with respect to the issue. We all talked to constituents and conveyed their thoughts in Ottawa. We were able to bring in and pass legislation, the first ever for Canada, that dealt with the issue.

In 2021, we actually updated the legislation that dealt with persons whose death was not reasonably foreseeable. We are making changes, but it has to be done in a fashion that is fair, reasonable and responsible.

We want to hear from Canadians. We want to hear what the different provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, stakeholders, doctors, nurses, those who are providing that direct care and the families have to say. This is a very personal decision that people have to make at very difficult times in their lives. We should not be taking it for granted in any fashion whatsoever.

That is the reason, once again, we have another special joint standing committee that hopefully will be starting its work in November, with the idea of doing something tangible over six or eight weeks, whatever it takes, so it can bring something back to the House to deal with advance requests for MAID. That seems to be the focal point of what the Bloc is talking about today.

I want to come back to some of my other comments in regard to the government's recognition of the importance of the issue of MAID. We have done that since 2015. We continue to recognize it and work with Canadians and the many different stakeholders, and we are committed to continuing to do that. It is unfortunate that because of the games being played by the leader of the Conservative Party and by members of the Conservative Party of Canada, the government is not able to continue to have important legislation debated, legislation like the Citizenship Act, the issue of military court to civil court with respect to sexual abuse, online harms act and the rail and marine safety act. All of these are so important.

I am asking the Conservative Party of Canada to stop focusing on its leader's best interests and to start thinking of Canadians' best interests. I am asking it to stop the filibuster and allow legislation, at the very least, to get to committee so Canadians can have their say.

● (1120)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, two weeks ago, the Ontario MAID Death Review Committee, out of the Ontario coroner's office, issued a damning report in which it identified multiple cases of abuse and non-compliance, persons who were administered MAID who likely did not qualify under the law, as well as evidence of elements of coercion leading to their deaths.

In the face of that shocking report out of the Ontario coroner's office, the silence from the Liberals has been deafening. Where has the Minister of Health been? Where has the Minister of Justice been? They have been AWOL.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is, why?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is amazing that the member, who is an active participant with Stephen Harper, and I have emphasized just how close his current leader was with Stephen Harper, wants to talk about being absent. The Supreme Court of Canada made a decision, and the Conservatives have absolutely nothing to say at all. They are not bringing in any legislation let alone any committees of the House of Commons to deal with the issue. They want to bury it.

Canadians who understand and appreciate the importance of MAID should be aware that one cannot trust the Conservative Party, especially under the far-right Conservative-Reform leader it has today. They should be fearful of the things that we will witness if it becomes government.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am so angry at what I have been hearing over the past 20 minutes. The parliamentary secretary to the government leader clearly showed his ignorance when it comes to advance requests. He showed his ignorance and lack of knowledge. He does not even know what is in Bill C-390, which was tabled here in May 2024. He said he is not familiar with its content, which offers a solution for provinces that are prepared to accept medical aid in dying and to protect doctors in the case of advance requests. He showed his ignorance.

That is what makes me angry. The government is lazy. It should be ashamed to abandon people who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease and can make an advance request in Quebec. No doctor will want to do that because the government will not put its big boy pants on.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is somewhat interesting that the member believes there are individuals in the House who have a full and comprehensive understanding of all private members' bills on the Order Paper. I suspect that she has knowledge of maybe 50% of them. That is being exceptionally generous. If I am wrong, she can stand up on a point of order and tell me that I am wrong.

The reality is that I found out about this debate just over an hour ago. For members to say that I do not know Bill C-390 and to diminish the importance of the issue at hand, which the House has to talk about, does a disservice to all parliamentarians. If the Bloc members genuinely want to have a healthy, strong debate on Bill C-390, at the very least, they could have raised it on an opposition day. They could have raised the issue weeks or months ago and said that they would like to have that debate.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is pretty mind-boggling to hear the parliamentary secretary to the leader of the Liberal government right now.

We are talking about a fundamental issue: dignity of human life and respect for people. Unfortunately, unless the Supreme Court or the Quebec Superior Court asks the government to take action, it does nothing. The special joint committee has been making recommendations for months. The Liberal government knew the Quebec legislation was coming.

What did the government do? Nothing.

What are you doing? Why do you always wait until the last minute? You are dragging your heels.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the hon. member that he must address his words through the Chair, and not directly to the government or the members.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, from day one, the government has understood the depth of the issue and how important it is to Canadians. As I indicated in my comments, this is very much a personal issue, with great difficulties surrounding the decision-making process. The government has brought in legislation, it has updated the legislation and it has had special joint committees in the past. There is another one coming up in November, which will provide a report in January. The federal government has the responsibility to do proper consultation despite what the Bloc and NDP might try to portray.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I must note that the Bloc Québécois made the effort to notify the government. The government learned last night that we would be debating this report. It is therefore false—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a matter for debate. The hon. member will likely have another opportunity to raise the issue.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would remind the parliamentary secretary that I was not elected during the Harper government. Second of all, the Carter decision was rendered at the end of the Harper government. It was up to the Liberal government to pass legislation, and the government has been in office for nine years.

The Supreme Court contemplated the need for stringent and robust safeguards to protect vulnerable persons. The report from two weeks ago out of the Ontario coroner's office indicates that those safeguards are not being properly monitored and enforced under the government's watch.

Again, why the silence from the justice minister and the health minister? Is it that they just do not care?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is half right. At the end of the day, the Carter decision from the Supreme Court of Canada was light in the Conservative mandate. I will give the member that much.

Having said that, there was absolutely no indication or approach to try to deal with the issue. At the time, Stephen Harper believed that maybe they would be able to deal with it, maybe they would not be able to deal with it. It was not a priority for the Conservative government.

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Yes, the member might not have been an elected member of Parliament at the time, but that does not take away from his involvement with Stephen Harper before he was an elected member of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-7 would not have been possible and would not have passed if Bill C-14 had not infringed on people's right to life.

I am very disappointed to hear my colleague's comments. He has not read Bill C-390, but he is in charge of procedure. He should be able to understand the bills that are introduced in the House. He should at least have a basic knowledge of that. Since he does not know, since he is ignorant, he does not know that the proposed solution—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to ask the member to withdraw the word “ignorant”. As we know, a person must not be attacked directly.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on a point of order.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I am having a hard time understanding the rules of the House. Conservative MPs recently attacked the member for Timmins—James Bay, saying he was anti-Semitic. The Conservatives regularly attack ministers by saying that they are incompetent.

Why can the member for Montcalm not say that the parliamentary secretary is ignorant?

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Drummond on a point of order.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, there are subtleties in the French language. The word “ignorant” can be considered an insult, but it can also be considered a state, a state of ignorance, a state of not knowing. In the current context, I think that my colleague from Montcalm wanted to make it clear that the member for Winnipeg North was not aware of the issue, did not know the file. It was not an insult; it was a description of a state.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The important thing seems to be the way the word is used. I simply want to make sure that no personal attack is being made. It is better to attack a government's policies than to attack an individual. I appear to have misinterpreted the word. A number of interpretations are possible. If I interpreted it incorrectly, I apologize.

The hon. member for Mirabel on a point of order.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I think that this is an important addition to the debate on this point of order. In his speech, the parliamentary secretary said that he was not up to date, had not read Bill C-390, and was unaware.

Members cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly. Since the parliamentary secretary referred to himself as ignorant, should he withdraw his remarks?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not really the right direction to take. I will return to the member for Montcalm.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I was not calling the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader ignorant. I was alluding to his ignorance of Bill C-390. This ignorance of the bill means he cannot understand that it is the most reasonable solution. We respect the fact that some provincial legislatures need to have more debate within their parliamentary democracy. That does not stop those that are ready and have developed a legislative framework from moving forward.

Contrary to what the member is saying, I know this file. I worked with people from across the country. He is the one who is not in step with Canadians; most of them agree with these advance requests. He does not know that.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member does not know that. Quite frankly, there are hundreds of private members' bills on the Order Paper, and it is not my responsibility to read 300-plus private members' bills.

There are all sorts of debates that come up in the House of Commons. Every time we have an issue debated, is the member suggesting that whoever is speaking should actually do private member's bill research to make sure that they reference the person who brought in the private member's bill?

The member made reference to the private member's bill in his comment. Out of respect for the member, I made reference to the bill, and I suggested that it might even be a part of the discussion when we have the committee, so I do not know why the Bloc members are so offended. I give my apologies for not knowing the details of all the hundreds of private members' bills, if that is what he is trying to get at. I would challenge any member, with the possible exception of the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, on actually knowing the details of every private member's bill.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Under the Prime Minister's watch, Canada's MAID regime is broken, and the Prime Minister broke it. His government is the architect of a MAID regime that serves as a warning to governments around the world that are contemplating perhaps implementing a MAID regime of what not to do. The world is taking notice.

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These are the headlines in the U.K. over the past two weeks about Canada's MAID regime: "Poor, depressed or lonely in Canada? Why not let us kill you", "Assisted dying 'abused' in Canada, admits group that helped legalise it", "I went for a mastectomy and they offered me assisted dying, Canadian cancer patient reveals", "Poor at risk of being coerced into assisted dying in Canada", "Canada's assisted death rush is a grim warning", "Euthanasia doctors in Canada struggle with the ethics of killing vulnerable patients", "Dark lessons from Canada" and "Once 'assisted dying' is legal, the boundaries of what is permissible expand". These are out of the Telegraph, the Times of London, the Independent and The Critic, over just the past two weeks.

UN experts, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, have condemned the Prime Minister's MAID regime. Here at home, virtually every disabilities rights organization has been sounding the alarm for years that the lives of persons living with disabilities are uniquely at risk after the government recklessly removed any connection between the foreseeability of death and eligibility for MAID. For years, there have been credible reports of widespread abuse, non-compliance with the law and persons who were administered MAID under highly questionable circumstances, to put it mildly.

In the face of those credible and disturbing reports, the response of the Prime Minister was to accuse those who were sounding the alarm that vulnerable persons were falling through the cracks as being blinded by ideology. How callous on the part of the Prime Minister and how ironic, because it is not those who are calling the alarm who are ideological but the Prime Minister himself.

If there was any doubt about the credibility of those reports of abuse and non-compliance, those have surely been put to rest in the face of the bombshell report of two weeks ago from the Ontario MAID Death Review Committee, out of the Ontario Coroner's Office. I emphasize that this is a committee composed of medical professionals and legal experts, as well as MAID assessors. The report found that vulnerable persons face potential coercion and undue influence to seek MAID. The report identifies a number of cases in Ontario where persons received MAID who likely did not qualify under the law and where there was evidence of elements of coercion leading to their deaths.

I will cite a few examples. One was a 40-year-old Ontario man who received MAID after his psychiatrist suggested it. The MAID practitioner who administered MAID drove him out to a location to administer MAID. The committee, in its report, said that that may have "created pressure and gave rise to a perception of hastening a person towards death."

• (1135)

Another Ontario man received MAID. He had, only a year before, attempted to end his life. He suffered from ulcers, had suicidal ideation and severe personality disorder. In all likelihood, he did not qualify under the law but he received MAID. In another case, an Ontario man was convinced that he had suffered from a vaccine injury. He received MAID. A post-mortem, however, found no pathological findings in that regard. There is the disturbing case of a 50-year-old London, Ontario, woman who received MAID due to a lack of adequate housing for her to live in a home having regard

for her symptoms of multiple chemical sensitivity syndrome. There are many other disturbing cases.

Alarm bells should be going off at the Department of Health and the Department of Justice but instead these shocking findings have been met with silence on the part of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice. It is as if they do not care.

The report found that among those who received MAID, who were not terminally ill, they disproportionately came from Ontario's most deprived communities, leading the committee in its report to suggest that "MAID could be the option of least resistance and be used to end lives when social policies have failed them."

The report identified widespread doctor shopping, persons who were turned down and who went to another medical practitioner until they got the result that they wanted. On that point, it should not come as a surprise, given that doctor shopping has been a well-known loophole in the law. It is a loophole that the government has failed to close and it is a loophole that has become the standard to be abused, abused by none other than CAMAP, the body that is supposedly responsible for developing training for MAID assessors, a body that has been tasked by the government to develop the MAID curriculum and a body that has received millions of taxpayer dollars from the government.

At a CAMAP seminar, radical and infamous MAID activist Jocelyn Downie actually encouraged doctor shopping. She said, "You can ask as many clinicians as you want or need." At another seminar, she said, "Disagreement doesn't mean you must stop."

Those are chilling words and illustrate how embedded abuse is in the system after nine years of the Liberals. Over the past nine years, the Liberals have failed to establish robust safeguards to protect the vulnerable. What safeguards they have put in place, they have systematically dismantled over the past number of years, all while turning a blind eye to reports of abuse and non-compliance, rendering the government and the Prime Minister complicit in that abuse and non-compliance.

As a result of the government's recklessness and negligence, the lives of the poor, the disabled, and, if the Liberals get their way, soon the mentally ill have fallen and will continue to fall through the cracks. MAID, after nine years of the Prime Minister is the very antithesis of what is humane and compassionate.

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• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I often listen to what my colleague has to say. I served with him on the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying. He seems to be an expert on scenarios that need to be examined carefully. It is okay to be a whistle-blower, but for the benefit of the people in the House, I would ask him to table the documents he mentioned. That would be interesting. I would love to read them.

The fact remains that, during the committee's deliberations, the only doctors who appeared and said that they were trying to change patients' minds were those who oppose MAID. They admitted that they were trying to discourage patients and said they were successfully changing their minds.

I pointed out that that was against the law, against Quebec's medical assistance in dying legislation and the Quebec college of physicians' code of ethics, and that did not bother them. Since this is a provincial responsibility, I would hope that the Government of Ontario has taken legal action against those who committed the acts the member talked about.

Madam Speaker, on a point of order, you have been waving at me for a while now, but I have not seen anyone else rise to speak.

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): True, no one has risen yet, but it has been over a minute and a half since the hon. member started asking his question.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I recognized the hon. member, and he rose. Other members may wish to ask questions, too. If not, the hon. member may ask another question. The hon. member for Montcalm has been speaking for over a minute and a half, and the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton has only five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I am asking for fair treatment. You are breaching my privilege, and not for the first time. I was 30 seconds in when you signalled to me to speed up, but the custom here is to see how many people have risen so they can be given the floor. I am calling you to order, Madam Speaker, because you do that to me all the time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. As I said, we have five minutes for questions and comments. We are now at three minutes and 19 seconds. The clock has been stopped. The hon. member needs to be quick if he wants to finish his question. I will see if any other members of the House wish to speak. Perhaps they wanted to let the hon. member ask the first question. I do not know. As I said, I am trying to be fair to everyone in terms of speaking time. If the hon. member can finish his question, I will ask that he be given an answer.

The hon. member for Montcalm seems to have finished asking his question.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Montcalm and I did indeed serve on the special joint committee together. He was not able to quite get to his question, but if I took what he said and the context in which I believe he put it with respect to advance requests, if that was what in fact he was alluding to, what I would say is that the committee was seized with a number of different issues, advance requests being merely one of them. Given that, there was insufficient time to properly study that complicated issue.

I understand that the National Assembly has studied the issue of advance requests, but we did not study it in a sufficient way. That is what I took away from the special joint committee and why some Conservative members issued a dissenting report that said that at the present time they are not ready to proceed with advance requests, due to insufficient study across Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada made a commitment to have a national discussion on the issue, which would incorporate the people of Canada, provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, different stakeholders, doctors, health care workers and so forth. I am wondering whether the member can provide his thoughts on the importance of doing that consultation before any form of legislation is actually brought through the House.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, that was a fair question from the parliamentary secretary. I would submit that it is important that there be widespread consultation, not just in the province of Quebec but right across the country, because there are legal, ethical and clinical challenges that have been identified with rolling out advance requests in a safe manner.

That was underscored by the expert report that the government commissioned in 2018, which found that the biggest risk with advance requests is that someone who might not wish to die would have their life terminated. That is a serious risk, so there needs to be widespread consultation to ensure that it can be done safely and that there are appropriate safeguards in place.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour and a pleasure to speak in the House and to have the privilege of doing so. It is extraordinary. Every time I have the opportunity to speak, I am extremely grateful to my constituents.

We are talking about medical assistance in dying, which is an issue that I am very familiar with because, in another life and in another Parliament, I had the opportunity to reflect on it in a non-partisan way. Quite honestly, it was a very important moment, if not the most important moment, of my political career in the Quebec legislature.

I listened to the member for Montcalm's speech. I am not trying to take away from what he is doing or saying. I am not trying to take away from all of the hard work, to use a Liberal expression, that he has put into the issue of medical assistance in dying. However, what I will not accept this morning is parliamentarians being insulted with regard to this issue.

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I am a Conservative well known in Quebec for my position on medical assistance in dying. My Conservative colleagues know that. Everyone knows that. It is no secret. However, we should not be told that we lack courage or compassion just because we are not like him or because some people in the House do not think like him. That is not the way to convince all parliamentarians and political parties to move forward on this issue.

I am sorry, but in my personal and professional experience as an MNA and minister in Quebec, that is not how things were done. That is not how the commissions in Quebec City were run. It worked across party lines. People discussed things together. I never heard any insults.

It is true that, as of yesterday, advance requests are allowed in Quebec. If it was so important to the member for Montcalm and the Bloc Québécois, why did the leader of the Bloc Québécois not use the leverage he had when he held the balance of power? When the NDP tore up its agreement, why did the Bloc Québécois not use Bill C-390 as a bargaining chip with the Liberals to keep them in power? Is this true or false?

Today, the hon. member rose in the House. I know he is sincere in what he is doing. I know him. I sat with him in Quebec City. I am wondering why he is the one rising on this issue and not the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, since it is her bill. However, that is another matter. It is a pity because we would have liked to hear from Ms. Bérubé on this issue—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member mentioned the member's name. She knows that she should not do that. I hope she will take note of that next time.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, I do not have the same attitude problem that others had toward the Speaker this morning, so I sincerely apologize.

Why did the Bloc Québécois not take this opportunity, knowing that it would change things in Quebec? They know it would. The Bloc introduced Bill C-390 on May 22, 2024. However, it waited until the day after this measure was implemented in Quebec to alert everyone and accuse us of being heartless. What the Bloc Québécois and its leader put up as bargaining chips is a bill on supply management and a bill on pensions. If the member is unable to convince his own leader to move forward and he is unable to convince him of the urgency, what makes him think he can hastily convince us to move forward with this today? It is a fantasy. It is totally irresponsible. I invite the member to tone it down, stop insulting us and take a look in his own back yard. What is the Bloc Québécois's strategy for moving its Bill C-390 forward?

This eminently sensitive and complex issue touches on individual values. I was a member of Parliament in Quebec City when the debate started back in the early 2000s. I was present when the vote took place, and I voted in favour of it. I was also there when MAID was implemented. The debate was not over in a day. It simply got the ball rolling. People sat down together, thought things through together and talked together. A multi-party committee was struck. After that, people reached a position and decided to move forward

with MAID. Parliament had spoken. Some people in my own political party in Quebec City voted against it. That was all right, because this debate touches on deeply entrenched and personal beliefs, and matters of conscience. I think that is important to highlight.

In politics there is partisanship. The Conservative Party gets blamed for a lot of things, so I am going to correct a few points. As far as health is concerned, my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons rose to say how bad and dangerous we are on issues of health. I would like to remind the House of another event I witnessed. When Prime Minister Harper was in charge, it is thanks to him that Quebec had its first asymmetrical agreement with the federal government. My colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière was there. I was in Quebec City and I saw that. The Conservative Party is a party that listens to the provinces and has demonstrated over the years its concern for respecting and accommodating the provinces.

Throughout my career, I've had to make some decisions that were much easier than others. For example, as labour minister, I changed labour standards and the Labour Code. That was a huge undertaking, but it was easier for the government than moving forward with medical assistance in dying. Nobody said this was an easy file. What I am saying today is that we need to be careful. Rushing this will get us nowhere fast, and we have no right to be anything less than thorough as we consider such an important issue.

• (1155)

At the end of the day, what do Canadians expect us to do? They expect us to make good decisions.

Had we acted quickly and thoughtlessly, we would have gone along with the current Liberal government's haphazard approach and ended up in the unbelievably absurd position of allowing MAID for people whose only illness is a mental disorder. Faced with that, we raised a red flag and insisted on waiting because we were not ready. We studied the issue and convinced the government not to bring it into effect on March 17, 2023, as set out in the act. We managed to extend the deadline by one year, to March 17, 2024. In the end, the decision was made to wait three years.

In conclusion, it is always better to take a little more time than to make irreversible mistakes.

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have indicated, MAID is deeply personal and complex. For individuals put in the position to have to make these decisions, they are very difficult and very emotional.

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As parliamentarians, all of us have very passionate opinions on this issue, and at the end of the day, there is an obligation for us to fully participate in consultations through the special standing committee the Government of Canada is advancing. It will be taking place in November and could go eight, 10 or 12 weeks. I am not sure of the exact time frame, but it is a very important process, given the nature of this issue, that will afford stakeholders an opportunity to be engaged on it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, there can never be too much consultation, especially on issues such as this.

I understand that some people may be impatient, but once again, I think that, if this were so urgent, then the Bloc Québécois would have taken the opportunity it had to introduce this bill as part of its bargaining strategy with the Conservative Party. Instead, the Bloc decided to focus on supply management and pensions.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her advice on the Bloc Québécois's strategy. She has the right to criticize, but when I look at the most recent polls, I see that the Bloc Québécois has the support of 43% of voters in Quebec, while the Conservatives have the support of only 22%. I am going to rely on the strategy that my leader has put in place because I think it is working better for now.

I take umbrage with the member's criticisms of my colleague from Montcalm and with the fact that she is questioning why he was the one to rise to speak rather than the bill's sponsor, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. The member for Montcalm has been working on this file for years. He really cares about it. He knows it like the back of his hand. He even pointed out the excellent work of the Conservative member who was criticizing him, so I find her criticisms hard to hear.

Here is my question for my colleague. The member for Montcalm criticized the Conservatives for being opposed to medical assistance in dying and he said that the Liberals lack political courage. Is the member able to prove our colleague from Montcalm wrong and say that the Conservatives will support this measure and that they are in favour of medical assistance in dying?

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, we look forward to studying Bill C-390 in the House and in committee when the time comes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague really emphasized the importance of not acting hastily. I think that was the main thrust of her speech.

I have been here quite a while. The debate on MAID began in 2017 or 2018. That is going back a ways. The courts forced the government to act. A joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate was struck that made recommendations. We have been talking about this and debating this for a long time. We need to take action.

We need to take action because, yesterday, the Quebec government issued a directive stating that advance requests are now permitted. This goes against the Criminal Code of Canada. This is not

about acting hastily. Yesterday's change poses a problem. There is a consensus in Quebec.

If the Conservative Party respects the provinces and Quebec, why does it not support the Quebec government's decision?

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, the government of the day is the one that calls the shots. When parliamentarians have the opportunity to look at Bill C-390, the Conservatives will be delighted to scrutinize it.

• (1205)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the exceptional member for New Westminster—Burnaby, who is sure to shed a great deal of light on this fundamental issue.

I would like to take 30 seconds at the beginning of my speech for something more personal. Today is October 31. A year ago, my partner's mother, Debbie Djevahirdjian, passed away. Today is the anniversary of her death. I just wanted to highlight her life and all the love she gave to her family and loved ones. We still miss her dearly.

I also wanted to talk about my grandmother Alice, who did not have an easy life. She had to flee a home where she was being mistreated and malnourished. She had to leave home when she was about 14. She was fortunate to meet my grandfather, who was in the army at the time. They had a child, a son, who is my father.

Alice had a very difficult start to life, and she also had an extremely difficult end of life with Alzheimer's disease. We saw her wither away before our eyes for years and years. My father wrote a book on Alzheimer's called *La mémoire des mots* that recounts the end of life of my grandmother, Alice Boulerice. This book also speaks to hundreds and thousands of families across Quebec and Canada.

We all have end-of-life stories from family and friends. We all have stories of people who have experienced the end of life of someone they loved very much and who, over time, ended up unable to recognize their spouse, husband, children or friends. It is extremely painful and extremely difficult. To witness this, even as a child or teenager, is something that leaves a mark.

This means that one day, in our own lives, we would like to have the opportunity to influence this, whether in research, science or medicine in general. It can also be through legislative measures that could mean that a person does not have to see themselves wither away and lose awareness of their own existence or the existence of the people they love. In short, we would like to do something about it.

Today I have the opportunity to rise in the House to talk about it. It is such a fundamental issue because it affects the dignity of human life. We know that we are all going to die one day. We hope it will be in the best conditions with as little suffering as possible, surrounded by our loved ones.

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The law currently does not allow advance requests for medical assistance in dying. MAID has been the subject of great debate in society, in Canada and in Quebec, for many years now. In Quebec, there is a certain consensus on the fact that this assistance was a way to help people, to respect their will and respect their wishes to leave this world in dignity and with as little suffering and humiliation possible. For example, Alzheimer's disease or other degenerative diseases can be extremely difficult.

Not everyone is going to want to ask for medical assistance in dying. It is a choice that is extremely personal, that involves the will of each person and how they see life according to their own values, religious or otherwise.

I mentioned my wife's mother earlier. Debbie had a good friend named Janice who had MS. Janice always wanted to live right up to the end. For her, asking for medical assistance in dying was never an option. We need to respect that.

Science and medicine have evolved when it comes to this issue, as has the societal debate. Now, we can say that people are beginning to agree that medical assistance in dying is acceptable and that we need to respect each person's decision. To date, medical assistance in dying has been allowed when the person's death was foreseeable in the very near future. It has not been allowed in the case of cognitive degenerative disease, such as Alzheimer's.

• (1210)

The Quebec government has decided to authorize advance requests. A person of sound mind who has been diagnosed with a serious and incurable illness will be able to sign a document outlining their wishes and establishing the criteria, timing and symptoms that will indicate when they are no longer capable of making a decision because they have reached a level of advanced cognitive impairment.

Now, we find ourselves in an absolutely impossible situation because, as of yesterday, Quebec law allows advance requests for MAID, which contravenes the federal Criminal Code, all because the Liberal government has failed to act for months and years. It is mind-boggling to see that the only thing the Liberals want to do on this issue is align themselves with the Conservatives by saying that they are not going to do anything, not going to move forward. It takes the Supreme Court to force them to make decisions and change laws. It takes the Quebec Superior Court to force them to make decisions. I have never seen a government with so little leadership on such a fundamental issue that affects every Canadian, every family in this society.

Now we find ourselves in this absolutely absurd situation. Because of their ineptitude, their inertia and the fact that they are dragging their feet, we are stuck in limbo. This Liberal government's response is to say that consultations will be held and that a major national conversation is needed. However, the Quebec law has been in force since yesterday. What are we going to do about it? The Liberals have known about this for months. A joint House of Commons and Senate committee has studied the issue and made recommendations. What did the Liberals do? They did absolutely nothing.

Now we find ourselves in this impossible situation, while the Quebec law is giving people hope, the hope of having a dignified end-of-life experience that respects their wishes. People do not want to see themselves waste away. I understand that completely. I would not want to see myself waste away like that either. I think most people probably feel the same, and we have to be able to respect that.

There is someone in Quebec who has become something of a spokesperson for people who receive this kind of diagnosis and want to decide for themselves when to depart this world and on what terms. Her name is Sandra Demontigny. She has been very active in the media and has touched a lot of hearts. Her message is that we need to move in this direction, and she hopes that the Quebec Government's legislation will spare her the worst when she reaches the end of her life. Ms. Demontigny, who has a genetic type of early onset Alzheimer's, has been advocating for this right for a long time. Naturally, she was very pleased by Quebec's decision. Her wishes are clear. According to an article published yesterday in *La Press*, she said the following:

I don't want to be a prisoner of my own body. I want to keep my dignity and independence. That's where I'm coming from. It's quite a privilege to be able to set my own limits and not have them forced on me.

There are clear rules. An advance request cannot be made by just anyone at any time. Guidelines have been established to support health care professionals in their discussions with patients who have received a diagnosis and, under the law, those professionals can only authorize MAID under very specific circumstances. MAID is regulated and scientific. Professionals, witnesses and third parties the person trusts are involved. It can be administered only when the patient has specific symptoms and when the disease and the person's conditions have progressed to a certain point, so I do not see why the current Liberal government is incapable of taking action. It is putting Quebec doctors in an impossible position right now. Their concern that they could be sued for abiding by the Quebec law and the patient's wishes is a legitimate one.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I made reference, in a previous question for a Conservative member, to the importance of having a national conversation on the issue of advance requests for MAID. It is a very serious issue. One jurisdiction in Canada has been very proactive on it, the province of Quebec, but we have to be respectful in trying to build a national consensus and must do a consultation. To be quite honest, we need to realize that MAID is a deeply personal and complex issue that touches people in very difficult times. We have to make sure we do it right and get it right.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on the importance of working with provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and the different stakeholders to make sure we are getting it right.

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● (1215)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, we have been discussing this issue here in the House, in various committees and in the Senate for almost 10 years now. Do the Liberals understand that by dragging their feet, they are playing into the hands of the Conservative Party, which wants nothing to do with medical assistance in dying? It is like a new alliance but against the interests of the people and against the interests of doctors too right now.

Dr. Mauril Gaudreault from the Collège des médecins du Québec is saying that advance requests are an important step forward for many patients in Quebec but that there are ongoing concerns about legal protection for doctors. This uncertainty about the legal protection for doctors is the direct result of the inaction of the Liberals, who are aligning themselves with the Conservatives to halt progress on this issue.

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to express my condolences to the member on the one-year anniversary of the passing of his mother-in-law.

I acknowledge that the member has made his position very clear, and I respect it. However, there have been concerns from medical professionals and other experts about clinical, ethical and legal issues associated with advance requests. These include, for example, the difficulty in securing or delivering fully informed consent, insofar as it is difficult for one to predict one's future state, as well as issues around the subjectivity of advance requests and the interpretation of such requests in the face of the physician's being unable to reaffirm consent by the patient. Could he address these concerns?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words.

The Quebec law is clear. If the Conservatives want to respect the provinces and provincial jurisdictions, they must align themselves with the Quebec government, within the framework of this law. I do not understand why, sometimes, they claim they are the provinces' closest allies and that they respect jurisdictions and, other times, when it does not suit them, they say that more consultations are needed. The Quebec law is clear.

An advance request for medical aid in dying may only be made by a person who has been diagnosed with a serious and incurable illness leading to incapacity to give consent to care...

The request must be made freely, without external pressure.

There is the health care professional, there is the patient and there is also a third party, a trusted person, with a personal and personalized description of the signs and symptoms that will decide the medical procedure for MAID that will follow. There is a framework for all of it.

I think that at this point, the Conservative Party should respect the Quebec law.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I was saying earlier, my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton is raising red flags to point out things that might not work, and that is fine.

He is also making generalizations to suggest that we are headed down a slippery slope.

Could my colleague tell all of our colleagues that access to care is not a problem considering that a diagnosis is required? If a person has a diagnosis, it means they are already receiving care.

Could he also tell us about the solemn moment when the doctor and medical team sit down with the patient who, in front of two witnesses, specifies the criteria establishing his or her tolerance limit?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, the member for Montcalm is absolutely right. There is a critical moment during the reflection process after a diagnosis. People do not decide out of the blue that they want to make an advance request for MAID. They are already involved with a system of professionals that includes people whose job is to uphold ethical standards. Quebec's health care system has ethics specialists on staff.

I also think that this is an equal rights issue. That is the position of the Alzheimer Society. People with Alzheimer's disease must have the same rights as any other Canadian.

● (1220)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying how sad I was to hear my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie talk about that sorrowful anniversary. Everyone who has participated in this debate has shared some extraordinarily difficult stories, and I will be no exception.

We are talking about such a difficult issue, end of life. Medical assistance in dying is part of the end of life. I am just as frustrated as my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie about the Liberals' failure to take action, even though we have been discussing this extremely personal and often extraordinarily difficult issue for 10 years now. The government is refusing to take action and show leadership on this issue. That is very sad.

This is not a partisan issue. It is about human life and respect for people who are in the final stages of their lives. In many cases, these people are in incredible pain. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to be there for them and make the necessary decisions. We need to show leadership on this. In my opinion, the fact that this issue has been dragging on for 10 years reflects parliamentarians' inability to respond appropriately.

That is why we are having this debate today. I welcome this debate. It is important, and we need a concrete outcome. The decisions made by the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying are recommendations that must be implemented as soon as possible.

[English]

We all have profoundly painful memories when we talk about medical assistance in dying. My colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, shared with us his extremely difficult anniversary. Tomorrow, we will be entering November. That is a very difficult time for me.

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Three years ago, my father, Terry Julian, passed away. He passed away in an extraordinarily painful time. He was in the palliative ward of Burnaby Hospital for two weeks before he died. He was in immense pain. The family rallied around. We tried to be there 24 hours a day during that period. It was extraordinarily difficult and heart-wrenching. When he finally passed, my sister was with him. I am incredibly grateful for that. My spouse and I were racing to the hospital, as were other members of the family. We were with him around the clock in his pain and in his final moments, but I was unable to arrive in time. If I could turn back the clock so that he did not experience those unbelievably difficult weeks before he passed, I would. It was heart-wrenching, as it is to all of us, to see him live through that difficult time.

A year later, my mother went through the exact same thing. It took two weeks for her to pass. She was in the palliative ward at Burnaby general hospital. It was an extraordinarily difficult time; again, we tried to be there 24 hours a day. The fact that my father had passed meant that my mother was simply not the same. They had been married for over 70 years, so the pain of a broken heart was obviously too much for her. I was with her when she passed. I held her hand, and I said prayers in her final moments. I was grateful for that privilege, that blessing to be with her. It was, again, extraordinarily difficult. If we could have changed the situation in some way so that she did not have to live through those two weeks of intense pain before passing, we would have given everything to do so.

• (1225)

These are heartbreaking moments. That is why the issue of medical assistance in dying is so important for us to consider. In each of our families, with our loved ones, many of us have experienced the pain of losing a loved one and the pain of seeing them suffer. Medical assistance in dying is designed not only to give those people a choice but also, as much as possible, to take away from the intense suffering that the person who is dying, the loved one, lives through. The entire family suffers from it as well when they are in the hospital ward at three or four in the morning, wondering what they can do to end the pain and suffering the loved one is going through. We do not want to see them suffer anymore; in a sense, their passing is a relief in one way. Yes, it is incredibly painful to know that they have passed on, but it is an end to their suffering.

In a civilized society, we try to make sure that people do not suffer unnecessarily. That is why this issue is such an important one. I think we all come from the same place. We have all, in the House and right across this country, lived the same difficult, terrible, extraordinarily painful experiences. As parliamentarians, we need to make sure that this suffering is relieved as much as possible.

I want to address a particular issue in the report, recommendation 10, which states that we need to support persons with disabilities. This is a fundamental part of the debate we are having today. When we look at those across the country who are forced to go to food banks to make ends meet or are homeless, more than half of them are people with disabilities. This country has failed people with disabilities; of that there is no doubt. We have seen some minor improvements in how people with disabilities are treated, but the reality is that this recommendation particularly strikes me as something we need to implement as quickly as possible. It will help ensure

that people with disabilities are not faced with that terrible choice between MAID and a life in which they simply are not provided with the supports that are so essential. We have seen the number of times in which people with disabilities have chosen MAID because they have not gotten these supports.

We have pushed for a disability benefit that provides for a guaranteed livable basic income. The member for Winnipeg Centre brought forward a bill that would provide those supports for people with disabilities so that they are not forced into that unbelievably difficult choice. However, to date, we still do not have in place a guaranteed livable basic income that applies to people with disabilities, which would provide them with the dignity and respect they deserve and should expect from their country.

This is a fundamental issue that absolutely has to be resolved. This is a country that has provided enormous resources to the banks and big businesses, with a trillion dollars in liquidity supports to the banking sector over the last 15 years. We have given wealthy Canadians untold amounts, tens of billions of dollars a year, in the form of overseas tax havens. We have the resources to put into place a guaranteed livable basic income for people with disabilities now. I hope that, as part of this debate, we choose to do that. Every Canadian deserves dignity. This is a debate about dignity.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I concur with many of the words the member has spoken, especially when we think of the bigger picture, which is that every Canadian deserves dignity. It is important during this debate that we recognize just how difficult an issue this really is. It touches the hearts and emotions of the people who have to make this very difficult decision. We cannot underestimate just how difficult that decision is.

This is one of the reasons that it is important, as the government has said, to start up that conversation with Canadians, including provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, the many different stakeholders, professionals and patients. I hope to hear from a lot of patients, as well as providers, bedside staff and family members. I think that is absolutely critical in continuing to bring in what will hopefully be the best MAID legislation that we have seen.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, as the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie pointed out, we are now in a legal vacuum, and that requires the government to act. Consultation is always important. We have had discussions and consultations for a decade now. It is important to act to ensure that the legal vacuum does not continue.

There is an ongoing debate in this country. I have no doubt that people feel strongly about MAID. I understand this. I think people from all sides come from a standpoint of good faith, but we cannot continue with a legal vacuum that imperils the ability of people to make that free decision on MAID.

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Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby quite appropriately spoke about persons with disabilities. When the Carter decision was rendered by the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court reasoned that vulnerable persons could be protected by what it characterized as a set of stringent and well-enforced safeguards.

I would submit that the safeguards that have been adopted by Parliament have not been adequate. The safeguards that were passed have been chipped away by the Liberals over the past several years, including the requirement that death be reasonably foreseeable. The removal of that safeguard resulted in the sounding of the alarm from virtually every disabilities rights organization in Canada, as well as the UN special rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Does the member share the concerns voiced by those who represent the disabilities rights community?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, yes, I do share those concerns, but that was not the principal focus of my speech. I was speaking to the fact that we have, in this incredibly wealthy country, not met what is required to ensure that all Canadians with disabilities can live in dignity, put food on the table and have a roof over their head. The appalling statistics that we, every single member of Parliament, have seen for people with disabilities who are homeless or who are having to line up at food banks should give us all pause as we are failing Canadians with disabilities each and every day.

We have immense resources when the banking sector calls. We have immense resources when very wealthy and privileged Canadians, the wealthiest of Canadians, and the most profitable corporations call. We need to respond to the calls of Canadians with disabilities.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have three things to say about my colleague's heartfelt speech.

First, on the issue of improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, it is important to remember that disability is social and impairment is individual. In that sense, we have a responsibility to improve the quality of life of these people socially. That is why we made recommendation 10. However, if it had been said that people with disabilities do not have the right to medical assistance in dying, that would have been discrimination. I hope my colleague agrees with me on that. These are two totally different issues.

We need to make sure that even when people request MAID because their quality of life is diminished and their social autonomy is affected, this does not mean that their request for MAID will be approved, contrary to what my Conservative colleague thinks.

Furthermore, on the issue of freedom of choice, it is important to remember here that, even if a person lives to the end of their days, that is what they have chosen. Freedom of choice is part of every instance of medical assistance in dying. People who have doubts and are anxious about making an advance request do not have to fill out a form. They can make a free and informed choice because it is

the role of the government to preserve that free and informed choice.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will ask the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby to give a very quick answer.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

I want to come back to the fact that the situation for persons with disabilities in Canada is deplorable. That is why I am saying that this needs to be addressed, but not in this bill. This is another issue—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but we have to resume debate. We are over the allotted time. I have been very generous with the time.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has the floor.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an absolute honour, as always, to stand here in the House of Commons to debate things that are of critical importance to Canadians. Certainly, having had the opportunity to serve on the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, I think it is important to have the ability to stand here today and allow Canadians to understand some of the difficulties that exist and why Conservatives put forward a dissenting report, which is easy for Canadians to find.

Much of the deliberations at the special joint committee were related to mental disorder as the sole underlying medical condition, so-called “mature minors”, persons with disability and advance requests. Clearly, the plight of Canadians under the NDP-Liberal government has increased the usage of MAID in this country, and I will go on to cite several examples of that as we go through this. I think that it is absolutely and incredibly important to look forward to. If I may, I will read a bit from the dissenting report.

[*Translation*]

We acknowledge that medical assistance in dying is a complex and deeply personal issue on which reasonable and well-intentioned people can disagree. However, there are serious problems with Canada's MAID regime.

Vulnerable people are being put at risk because of the Liberal government's failures. Regardless of one's views on MAID in principle, these issues cannot be ignored.

After nine years of increased poverty and despair under this Prime Minister, Canadians are turning to MAID because they cannot afford to live with dignity.

[*English*]

I would say that this statement is incredibly important in allowing Canadians to understand that, as far as Conservatives are concerned, those Canadians who are well intentioned and well informed are about to speak about this incredibly emotionally charged topic in a hopefully non-partisan way on behalf of Canadians.

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As a former practising physician, these are issues that came up multiple times when I was practising medicine. Medical assistance in dying is something that came about during my time in practice. When I first started practising, medical assistance in dying was not out there to be considered. That being said, I certainly feel it is something that I can provide some insight on.

I think one of the other things that is really important for Canadians to understand, and I know my colleague spoke a bit about this, is how Canada and the Canadian regulations around MAID are perceived around the world. I will quote the American Journal of Bioethics. The title of this particular article is “When Death Becomes Therapy: Canada’s Troubling Normalization of Health Care Provider Ending of Life”. It is a telling commentary on how the regime here in Canada is perceived.

I will quote a bit from the article:

Undeniably, a strikingly higher number of people die with direct health care provider involvement in Canada’s euthanasia regime, euphemistically termed “Medical Assistance in Dying” [MAiD], than under a California-style assisted suicide system. Daryl Pullman rightly identifies several key reasons: the fact that in about all cases it involves a lethal injection by health care providers, rather than assisted-suicide with self-administration of medication; the law’s vague and broadly interpreted access criteria; “acquiescence and [...] indifference of federal and provincial authorities, the courts, and medical associations”; and, briefly mentioned, the failure to treat ending of life as a last resort.

● (1240)

When I think of those incredibly emotional words, because they are incredibly emotional, I often wonder how we realistically got to a spot where we are in a culture of death and we believe in the ability to simply hand over our essence of life to a health care practitioner. How did we get there? How have we failed as a society to simply say, “Life is no longer worth living. Just go ahead and kill me.”

I can remember when the debates on this first began and everybody talked about the slippery slope argument, saying that we would never go down these roads and that this would simply be for those with a reasonably foreseeable natural death. Canadians, in their heart of hearts, because of who we are, really believed that the expansion of MAID would never happen. I have heard my colleagues in the House today speak a lot about how it is people’s right to die. What about their right to live? Once again, this is a country that is incredibly developed with great riches and wealth. This is the golden age of Canada, if one were to use that term. How did we get to the point where it is not about caring about each other, but about saying, “Yes, I agree with you. Just go ahead and end it because your life is not worth living.”

As we begin to contemplate those things as a country, I do believe that it is incredibly important to value human life and to say that it is important. Are there folks out there who are suffering? There absolutely are, and I certainly will come back to that.

Before we talk about some very sad examples, the other important thing to talk about is the state of palliative care in Canada. I had the opportunity as a physician to witness an incredible change in how palliative care is delivered where I live in Nova Scotia. It was absolutely life-changing to have a driving force behind a palliative care program where I live that enabled care, which had historically been delivered by family physicians, to go to a quality

team of palliative care providers that was able to provide a much more nuanced way for people to continue to live a life, even though it was difficult. I might be so bold as to say that my great friend Dr. David Henderson was the person leading that charge.

Historically, where I had the opportunity to work in our hospital in Truro, Nova Scotia, palliative care was provided by family physicians. Realizing that many symptoms during the end of life and the dying process were very difficult to control, this great physician, Dr. Henderson, came along and was able to begin to educate all of us family physicians who were delivering care to make us better providers. As time went on, many folks began to realize that they were not very good at palliative care, which not everybody is good at, if I can use that terminology. They also began to realize that there were certain skills, not just in determining which medications to give at which time but also in speaking to patients to understand what their goals and desires were. Was it that they simply wanted their pain and suffering to be alleviated at all costs, or did they want to be more functional in their abilities? Those are incredibly important conversations to have with patients.

Dr. Henderson also realized that delivering care at people’s homes was an essential part of palliative care because, of course, folks often feel much better when they are able to stay in their own homes and have the distressing symptoms alleviated there. Dr. Henderson was a great advocate to say that we also needed to have nurses trained in palliative care who can then be the extenders of physician care at home or in the hospital. Dr. Henderson has been a wonderful advocate for the palliative care program in Nova Scotia and, indeed, across the country.

● (1245)

The sad state of affairs is that good-quality palliative care such as I have described does not exist across the country. I would suggest that colleagues here in the chamber give that a good thought because I do believe if good-quality palliative care existed across the country, perhaps some of the conversations we are having now would be quite different.

I also think it important that we understand that seven million Canadians do not have access to primary care. Of course, that does affect the quality of care overall in terms of how Canadians are able to manage symptoms of their illness and understand their illness, because of course in Canada, primary care is the way we access the system. Once again, the demise of our much-cherished health care system has certainly accelerated at the hands of the NDP-Liberal government over the last nine years.

As I mentioned, a recent report from CIHI lays out clearly that 5.4 million adults do not have access to primary care, which we know translates into about seven million Canadians without access. This means they are unable to get lab work, diagnostic imaging or referrals to specialists unless they are in walk-in clinics or they are visiting emergency rooms, which we know then creates an entire other type of problem.

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Those things being said, I do want to get to some examples about MAID in particular. There are several quotes about MAID in Ontario. For example, PBS reports, “in Ontario, more than three quarters of people euthanized when their death wasn’t imminent required disability support before their death in 2023”. A professor of health in the Netherlands has stated, “Canada seems to be providing euthanasia for social reasons, when people don’t have the financial means, which would be a big taboo in Europe.”

We begin to again unpack those types of things. A report just this morning outlined that 40% of Atlantic Canadians have difficulty paying for the basic necessities of life. The article cited food, rent and home heating. That is a disturbing feature when we hear what the professor in the Netherlands said. Of course, the Netherlands has had a MAID regime for quite some time now.

The other statistic we need to be aware of is that it would seem poverty is a contributing factor in Ontario's MAID provision: “People in the lowest ‘material resource’ category represent 20 per cent of the general population, but they make up 28.4 per cent of Track 2 MAID recipients, compared to 21.5 per cent of Track 1 recipients.” When we begin to understand some of these statistics, not to be foolish about it, but as we might say, “Houston, we have a problem.”

The impact of the housing crisis seems to be a factor. Persons identified as having housing instability made up 48.3% of track 2 MAID deaths in Ontario, an absolutely staggering figure. Isolation is also a definite factor in track 2 cases: Ninety per cent of track 1 MAID recipients provided the name of an immediate family member, spouse, sibling or child as their next of kin, compared to 73% of track 2 recipients. People who accessed MAID via track 2 safeguards were more likely to have provided the name of a friend, extended family member or other person, such as a caseworker, lawyer or health care provider.

As I started off my remarks with, here we are in this incredible country in which we live, and people are socially isolated. They are unable to afford housing and access services.

The other disturbing trend, of course, is the significant increase in MAID in Canada. In 2019, there were 5,631 cases of MAID reported in Canada, accounting for 2% of all deaths. The total number of deaths marked a 26% increase over the number of MAID deaths in 2018. In 2020, there were 7,595 cases of MAID reported in Canada, 2.5% of all deaths, and the toll represented an increase of 34.2% from the year prior.

• (1250)

In 2019, as I mentioned, 5631 cases of MAID were reported, and by 2022 there were 13,241 MAID deaths reported in Canada, accounting for 4.1% of all deaths nationwide. This is a year-over-year growth rate in the 30% range. The total number of medically assisted deaths reported in Canada since the introduction of the federal MAID legislation is 44,958 Canadians. It can therefore be projected that the number of MAID deaths, as well as the share of these deaths represented in the annual death toll, will increase in 2024 and may reach up to 5% of the national total of deaths.

As we begin to look at these things, we see that this is a very disturbing trend. I do want to quote a couple of disturbing cases that I

think we all need to be aware of. They are readily available in open-source literature.

Christine Gauthier, a disabled veteran and former paralympian, was offered MAID by a caseworker from Veterans Affairs Canada during a phone call in which she discussed her deteriorating condition. Gauthier had for five years been seeking to get a wheelchair ramp in her house. As a veteran myself, this is particularly disturbing.

We know that there are other cases of veterans who called Veterans Affairs for help, simply for their mental health, and of course were offered MAID as part of what the individuals at Veterans Affairs thought was appropriate in terms of offering treatment to veterans. It is appalling that folks who sign on the dotted line to serve our country, to uphold our values elsewhere and potentially, of course, to put their lives on the line are offered death as opposed to help.

In another case, Normand Meunier, a former truck driver who had been paralyzed from a spinal cord injury in 2022, was forced to spend 95 hours on a stretcher after being admitted to a hospital in Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, with a respiratory virus in January 2024. This led him to develop a severe pressure sore that eventually worsened to the point where bone and muscle were exposed and visible. Mr. Meunier, in terrible pain for the ensuing two months, opted to end his life, and he passed away on March 29.

When we look at these stories, we see that they represent a failure of a health care system, as I quoted from a report, “when death becomes therapy”, as opposed to understanding that we need a health care system that is responsive to the changes that have been foisted upon us by the NDP-Liberal government.

I think it is also important to talk about the blue seal program for Canadians that the next Conservative government will put forward. It would allow international medical graduates to have their qualifications and experience recognized quickly as they come to this country and want to serve Canadians and to have a better paycheck in order to be able to look after their families as well.

That will be something, of course, that a Conservative government will be able to put forward, as we have had multiple discussions with the stakeholders and decision-makers at both provincial and national levels. I think it is incredibly important we give Canadians hope that there is help on the way and that the way things are is not the way they need to be forever. Change is possible.

We also know that understanding exactly how the MAID regime works is important on behalf of Canadians. Consultation needs to be had, and we need to be able to replace the hurt that Canadians, sadly, are now experiencing with hope for the future so they once again can be prosperous in the dream and the contract of being a Canadian: If we work hard, we will be able to achieve a job with a reasonable paycheque, put food on our table and a roof over our head, live in dignity in this country, and not have to worry about death being the therapy for all that ails us.

● (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member highlighted how important the issue is in terms of personal perspective, and I do not think anyone challenges that at all. In the debate on this subject over the last number of years, there have been all sorts of emotions on both sides of the issue. That is healthy for the public debate because I think it is a reflection of what Canadians are feeling on the issue.

The challenge I have for the Conservative Party is that even when the Supreme Court decision was made, it was not until the Liberals took government that tangible action actually started. There is now a commitment to have a national conversation on the next step; it is coming up in November and will go through to January. I am wondering whether the member could provide his thoughts regarding how important it is that we do have that national conversation, because the legislation should reflect Canadian values.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, obviously, engaging Canadians in what they think our future should look like is incredibly important. That being said, what we also know is that it is difficult to have an honest and open conversation when we know, sadly, that the systems under the NDP-Liberal government are failing Canadians. Mental health care, for instance, is not adequate in this country. I already talked at length about palliative care and the inadequate nature of it across the country. Once again, it would be inappropriate for me not to consider the lack of primary care for seven million Canadians across this country.

When we do not have appropriate systems that Canadians know and love and have come to rely upon, it is very difficult, because Canadians would suggest they do not have other options besides death—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We need to get to other questions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talks about death as therapy. Nearly 70% of people who die with medical assistance in Quebec do so in the context of cancer, in other words at the terminal phase of life, where the process of dying has started and is irreversible.

How can he talk about death as therapy in a context like that where people are already in palliative care?

I would like to know from this former doctor if he did what the law prescribed when a patient told him that they would like to exer-

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cise their freedom of choice and receive medical assistance in dying rather than die after suffering in agony.

● (1300)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, as I already said, it is always hard to say. The situation is always emotional. If the choices are not what we want here in Canada, for example when it comes to primary health care, that is a problem. There is also palliative care. If that is not offered in every province, like in the truly rural regions of Quebec, this will always be a problem. Patients who do not have access to palliative care have no real choice.

To me it is essential to have all the choices on the table so that a patient can make the right choice for himself.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is certainly very interesting, especially on a difficult subject such as this, when a chamber with all different perspectives on all different sides comes together to discuss such a topic. I disagree with many of the things the hon. member has said. However, he spoke at length about palliative care, and one of the recommendations of the report we are discussing today is recommendation 6, which talks about the increased funding for the implementation of the action plan on palliative care.

When the member talked about the demise of health care, it brought me to the idea of increasing the transfer payments that go to the provinces in relation to all health care. We know that with the Harper government there was a significant decrease in the transfer payments for health. They have not been renewed by the Liberal government, so I would ask the member about his commitment to the increasing of transfer payments to ensure that we do not experience the demise of our health care system.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, there were a few things there. This is a serious topic, but it is interesting how the long legacy of Mr. Harper lives in the heads of many in the NDP-Liberal party. That being said, I know very clearly that the Harper government increased the value of transfer payments to 6% on a year-over-year basis, which is more than any government had done previously. During a press conference, the Leader of the Opposition and I made it clear that we would honour commitments that have already been made to provinces.

The other interesting part of this is that there are many opportunities for the federal government to show leadership, which the NDP-Liberal government refuses to take, to get folks on board, such as with the blue seal program, which would allow international medical graduates with experience to apply their trade in our great country, providing a service to Canadians who desperately need it. I have mentioned many times that seven million Canadians do not have access to primary care under the failed NDP-Liberal government.

Then, of course, there is the ability to get the appropriate stakeholders and decision-makers together to support the provinces so they can unfold the mandate that is so essential to what they are trying to do.

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It is a shame that the New Democrats continue to prop up the Liberal government. They say the house is burning down, but they are Nero on the wall playing the fiddle.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the knowledge he brings to this debate.

I want to ask him about the recruitment of doctors and health care professionals and their participation in the MAID regime. In my life, I know several people who used to work in the health care field and have now moved out of that field because of concerns about their conscience rights. We have seen entire hospices get shut down across this country because they are unwilling to participate. I do not think this was the intended consequence of the bill.

I am wondering if the member has any comments about that.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, this is interesting. I have the exact statistics somewhere in my mound of paperwork on this particular topic, but it would appear that year over year, in Canada, many more physicians are participating in the MAID regime. It is a sad reflection on society that those physicians could easily be trained to provide better palliative care. We know there is a call for patients across the country to receive appropriate palliative care.

Many folks in the chamber may think of palliative care as simply giving people more medication to end their physical pain. However, we know clearly from those who provide good-quality palliative care that it is about having conversations with families, partly about providing medication, talking about the lives they have had and talking about the difficulties they may have suffered. It is also very clearly, with its patient-centred approach, about what their goals of care are and how to meet those needs.

That often takes a very specialized team of people. However, if we look at the number of physicians choosing to provide MAID who are not providing palliative care, there is an obvious ability to recruit those physicians, in the appropriate circumstances, to provide good-quality palliative care for folks who are not able to receive it. Again, this exists in many rural and remote places across Canada. It is a real travesty when that situation exists.

• (1305)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country. I will be splitting my time.

I rise to speak in a concurrence debate that was put forth today regarding the report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, MAID. Conservatives have put forth a dissenting report on this. I will speak from the perspective of the shadow minister for disability inclusion and will speak to the impending Liberal government law on MAID eligibility, coming into effect after the next election, which will include mental illness as a sole underlying condition.

The Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying heard from a range of experts regarding MAID, including clinicians, psychiatrists, disability advocates and mental health experts. Many expressed the same concern regarding including mental health as the sole underlying condition for MAID eligibility. Many experts are saying it is impossible to clinically determine if a pa-

tient will be able to recover from a mental health challenge. Dr. John Maher, a clinical psychologist and medical ethicist, told the committee, “Psychiatrists don’t know and can’t know who will get better and live decades of good life. Brain diseases are not liver diseases.”

Abandoning people with mental illness to turn instead to medical assistance in dying is wrong, and experts in the field agree. The Ontario Medical Association surveyed Ontario psychiatrists in 2021 and found that 91% of respondents opposed the expansion of MAID for mental illness. Only 2% of respondents supported it. This speaks volumes to how wrong the Liberal government is on this issue.

Disability groups are now sounding the alarm over the drastic negative effects MAID can have on those with disabilities and concerns over looking after the most vulnerable. Recently, the Disability Rights Coalition put out a release detailing how those with disabilities are affected by MAID. This coalition includes major disability advocacy organizations, including the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Inclusion Canada, Indigenous Disability Canada and DAWN Canada, among others. These are organizations whose missions are to support the vulnerable, and we need to consider their concerns.

In a release, the Disability Rights Coalition stated, “MAID has resulted in premature deaths and an increase in discrimination and stigma towards people with disabilities across the country.” Krista Carr, the executive vice president of Inclusion Canada, stated, “We are witnessing an alarming trend where people with disabilities are seeking assisted suicide due to social deprivation, poverty, and lack of essential supports”. Heather Walkus, the national chairperson of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, stated, “Instead of providing the support and resources we need to live, our government is offering death.”

This release comes after a letter was sent to the justice minister in 2022, signed by 50 disability organizations that called for the expansion of MAID for mental illness to be stopped. In this letter, the signatory stated, “To legalize MAiD for mental illness would pour gas on a fire that is already out of control.”

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How can we trust the Liberal government with expanding MAID to include those with the sole underlying condition of mental illness when its record on this issue has been so troubling? There have been numerous reports detailing the increasing prevalence of Canadians seeking MAID for circumstances for which it was never intended. Multiple Canadian military veterans who fought for our country and were seeking help from Veterans Affairs were pressured by Veterans Affairs staff to consider medically assisted dying. One veteran, a Paralympian trying to get a wheelchair ramp, testified that a Veterans Affairs employee offered her assisted dying instead of addressing her concerns. A food bank manager from Mississauga reported that clients asked about assisted suicide without a special physical illness. We also heard testimony at the human resources committee from witnesses who were talking about persons with disabilities considering MAID due to the cost of living.

• (1310)

Most recently, CTV reported on a woman who has health conditions making her unable to work, and she applied for MAID for financial reasons. The editorial states:

“I’m very happy to be alive. I still enjoy life. Birds chirping, small things that make up a day are still pleasant to me, they’re still enjoyable. I still enjoy my friends,” she said.

“There’s a lot to enjoy in life, even if it’s small.”

This is where we are in Canada after nine years of the Liberal government. We have all these issues, yet the government continues, undeterred, in proceeding with expanding MAID for those whose sole underlying condition is mental illness. Experts in mental illness and those who support and advocate for persons with disabilities have come out against this, citing concerns for abuse and concerns over protecting the most vulnerable.

I have been very touched by some of the correspondence from residents in Kelowna—Lake Country who have shared their concerns with me. Judith, from my community, wrote to me with her concerns after hearing about the delay in the planned expansion of MAID for those with mental illness as the sole underlying cause. She acknowledged that many people have brought forth many concerns to the government, and she was surprised that the Liberals are now delaying the expansion and not stopping it altogether.

Not every community has the same mental health services, especially in rural and remote areas. I previously spoke to a young woman who was movably shaken by the thought of medical assistance in dying being made available to individuals whose sole underlying condition is mental illness. His deceased mother had struggled with mental illness, and he was extremely angry to hear that the Liberal government had not cancelled outright the option for people to seek MAID under these parameters.

People were rightly concerned about protecting the most vulnerable in our society. It is because of this that the reckless expansion was paused, but it was not halted and stopped altogether. The public outcry and concern are what forced the government to take the first step on the MAID delay for people with the single underlying cause of mental illness. Unfortunately, the pause in this expansion is only that, a pause.

Parliament would be better served in our responsibility to Canadians, particularly vulnerable Canadians, to altogether abandon the

expansion of MAID to those with mental illness as the sole underlying condition. We cannot give up on people experiencing mental illness. We must ensure that support is there for help and treatment.

I do not want to give up on people. There are so many people in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country who suffer from a mental health issue, and it is heartbreaking to think that the government’s solution to these issues is offering assisted death. It is the government giving up on those experiencing mental illness.

We must focus on giving people help and hope. We must focus on treatment for mental illness rather than assisted death. The Conservatives do not want to give up on people. Medical assistance in dying cannot be the most accessible solution for individuals with mental illness or for those seeking palliative care that may either not exist or be very limited in the community where someone lives. There are multiple recommendations with respect to palliative care and persons with disabilities in the joint committee’s report we are discussing today.

Also, instead of bringing forth changes to expand MAID to persons with mental illness, the Liberals should be focusing on proposals to bolster mental health support for Canadians, many of whom are facing challenges given the last nine years of the Liberal government, which has made life so hard for so many. We have to remember that it was the Conservative member for Cariboo—Prince George who spearheaded the three-digit suicide prevention hotline, 988, in Canada.

As I mentioned, the Liberals did not bring in legislation to cancel the implementation of MAID for those with the sole underlying condition of mental illness; they just delayed it. Instead of these misplaced Liberal policies, building the mental health support systems that Canadians need to live full, fulfilling lives should be the top priority. This is a top priority for the Conservatives in this Parliament and in a future Conservative government.

People suffering from mental health issues need resources to help them. Recovery is possible, and we must never give up hope on anyone. The Conservatives will always stand on the side of the most vulnerable, their loved ones and those who support them.

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• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commented on how important the issue was when I spoke to it. Having said that, I also commented on how the Conservative Party was filibustering to prevent debate on a wide spectrum of issues. I want to give the member the opportunity to comment as to why the Conservatives do not want legislation to come forward. If the member does not want to answer, then she can continue with her remarks on this issue, which no doubt is an important issue.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, we are discussing a report from an important committee today. A lot of what I spoke about was not in reference to legislation in front of us now or legislation that the Liberals were looking to bring forward. I was speaking about legislation in the past and the fact that the Liberals delayed the implementation of MAID being available to persons suffering from the sole underlying condition of mental illness. As part of that, many persons from the disability community and advocates have come out against this.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I imagine she has read the report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

The committee is made up of parliamentarians from all parties in the House as well as senators. In recommendation 13, all committee members agreed that we were not ready to make a decision on extending MAID to people whose sole medical condition is mental illness. The committee's recommendation was to continue consultations with experts and to continue the committee's work.

Does this recommendation reassure her, since she will have the opportunity to give this further thought with all the parliamentarians and senators on the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is really important to listen to Canadians, especially those serving the most vulnerable of Canadians. Unfortunately, the government did not listen at the outset and delayed the implementation of MAID being available to persons suffering from the sole underlying condition of mental illness.

It is really important that we continue to listen to Canadians who have very strong concerns about this and, in particular, people from within the disability community who have put forth very strong issues and concerns about this as well.

• (1320)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we have seen from the Liberal government is a total disregard and disrespect for the rights of persons with disabilities. A former justice minister failed to appeal a lower court ruling, ignoring every disability rights community that said removing the safeguard that death be reasonably foreseeable would result in persons with disabilities falling through the cracks. Now we have seen,

since the government removed that safeguard, that this is precisely what has happened.

Could the member speak to that?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his diligent work on this topic. It is incredibly important that we listen to people with lived experience and those serving, supporting and advocating for persons with disabilities, because they are on the front lines. They know what the very important issues are, and they are the ones bringing forward the issues that really need to be addressed. We need to ensure we are protecting the most vulnerable people in our society and in Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with a great deal of emotion that I rise today to speak to this report. We are talking about it because advance requests for MAID are a topical issue in Quebec, which implemented its legislation yesterday. It was a big day. It took a year for the act to pass, and it came into force this week.

This is a great day for Quebecers. From now on, people diagnosed with an incurable, neurodegenerative disease will be eligible to submit advance requests. Obviously, they are under no obligation to make a request, but the option is theirs. They are free to state their wishes after being diagnosed with a disease that would eventually rob them of any ability to make decisions as they become incapacitated.

All day long, I have been listening to speeches questioning the idea of medical assistance in dying. I felt like I had gone back in time. We have already had this debate, and even though it is not over for some people, patients can now request MAID anywhere in Quebec and Canada. In Quebec, we had a fairly broad and lengthy public debate. I think we are ahead of the curve when it comes to discussing this in our society.

Medical assistance in dying is not an end in itself. A Quebecker who receives a diagnosis and requests MAID has a number of choices available to them. They can decide to request palliative care, palliative sedation or a lethal injection that allows them to choose when they will die. This debate has been quite clear in Quebec for the past 10 years or so. We are quite advanced in our approach to this freedom of choice, this freedom to make an informed decision, with the support of a professional team, about leaving this earth for the great beyond, if I may use that expression.

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My colleague from Montcalm, whom I greatly admire for his expertise, diligence and professionalism, explained to us in his speech that a joint committee was established in 2021 following legal decisions by a court asking us to reflect on this issue. A committee was struck, consisting of members from all the parties, including the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the NDP, as well as senators. Honestly, I would say that they did monumental work. For nearly two years, they heard witnesses from Quebec and other provinces, and from international experts; all of them, either for or against, shared what they knew. The breadth of everything they were able to learn and understand is impressive.

As a parliamentarian, I value the work that has been done. It has not always been easy, because this is a sensitive issue. Advance requests and the other points we agreed to study are not easy topics. It was often emotional, given that it involves personal values. This led to some good discussions. In the end, the committee members agreed on some of the many recommendations, and I should repeat that there were Conservative members on the committee. They agreed on two recommendations that I would like to read, because it appears that, somewhere along the way, we have forgotten what we are debating today. On the Bloc Québécois side, we wonder why, despite an exhaustive, professional and very rigorous study, the government is not taking note of the report, particularly recommendations 21 and 22, which deal specifically with advance requests.

• (1325)

Recommendation 21 states, “That the Government of Canada amend the *Criminal Code* to allow for advance requests following a diagnosis of a serious and incurable medical condition disease, or disorder leading to incapacity.”

Recommendation 22 states, “That the Government of Canada work with provinces and territories, regulatory authorities, provincial and territorial law societies and stakeholders to adopt the necessary safeguards for advance requests.”

These are two great recommendations that, in 2023, urged the government to get to work because the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying had reached a consensus.

The government did nothing. It dragged its feet on this very important component of medical assistance in dying, knowing full well that Quebec would legislate and that a law would come into force in Quebec. We knew we would find ourselves in the position that we are in today. A province has taken the time to think things through and to pass legislation that reflects what Quebecers want. However, the federal government ignored that legislation, shelved the report and failed to put any effort whatsoever into determining how it should move forward with the entire debate on advance requests, given that Quebec has its own law.

Now, we are in a situation where doctors have the right to offer medical assistance in dying to people who make an advance request. Some will likely do so. However, others will still be afraid to provide this care, and that is what worries us. I would encourage the government to get to work as quickly as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

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

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

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

* * *

• (1330)

[English]

PETITIONS

OCEAN ECOSYSTEM

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a huge privilege today to table petition e-5144, which was signed by 3,444 people from across Canada.

These petitioners cite that Canadians care deeply about the health of the ocean and depend on thriving ocean ecosystems. They say that the cruise ship industry, which we know is important to the economy, is growing quickly and setting new records, year over year, for passengers travelling from and through the west coast of Canada to Alaska. These cruise ships generate significant amounts of pollutants that are harmful to human health, aquatic organisms and coastal ecosystems.

They say that Canada's regulations under the Canada Shipping Act addressing the discharge of sewage and grey water are less stringent than those in the U.S. Pacific coastal states. Canada has brought an interim order to address this discrepancy, but significant loopholes undermine its effectiveness and put ecosystems and food harvesting areas like that in Baynes Sound and the Salish Sea, and communities—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the hon. member that he should give a very short idea of what the petition is and not read the whole thing.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, the petitioners are calling on the government to require cruise ships to have holding tanks of sufficient size to store all sewage and grey water produced during their voyages; remove the exemption that allows cruise ships to discharge sewage and grey water close to shore; extend the application of cruise ship discharge regulations to the entirety of Canada's internal waters and territorial seas; establish complete no-discharge zones within marine protected areas; and ban the use of scrubbers in Canada's internal—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is way too long.

Routine Proceedings

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

• (1335)

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to table today.

My first petition is one I have presented before. It is about the green Calgary Co-op compostable bags that the federal government has ruled are not a compostable product. In fact, they are.

The City of Calgary in this petition is again drawing the attention of the House of Commons to the fact that the bags are fully recyclable and compostable within the city's own system. The petitioners are calling for the Government of Canada to recognize that compostable bags do not constitute single-use plastic and are therefore worthy of an exemption to the upcoming ban.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, my second petition today is about the Falun Gong Canadians who are in Canada, who continue to be persecuted by the CCP. The petitioners are drawing the attention of the House to the work of the late Canadian lawyer David Matas and a former Canadian secretary of state for Asia-Pacific, the late and great David Kilgour, who conducted an investigation in 2006. They concluded that the CCP regime and its agencies throughout China have been putting to death a large number, in the tens of thousands, of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience and their vital organs have been seized involuntarily for sale at a high price.

The petitioners are also drawing the attention of this House to the fact that the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning organ harvesting abuses in China. They are asking the government to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China, amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting, and pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the CCP's systemic crimes against Falun Gong.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise. I also want to follow up on a petition in support of Falun Gong practitioners who are being persecuted in China by the Chinese Communist Party, like Gao Lijuan who is a prisoner of conscience. Because she is a Falun Gong practitioner not allowed to practise, the government has thrown her and many others in jail, which is disgusting.

However, as we all know, talking about the Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting, over 1.5 million people have signed petitions to stop this disgusting and barbaric practice of using political prisoners in China as sources of organs that are then sold around the world. This was brought to light, as was mentioned, by our former colleague David Kilgour as well as by David Matas, a human rights lawyer based in Winnipeg.

We need to follow suit as the European Parliament has done, passing a resolution condemning this practice. Falun Gong practitioners here in Canada who signed this petition are asking the House to pass this, bring in new legislation and end the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to present a petition. The petitioners note that frequent parole hearings often revictimize and retraumatize the families of victims. They note that the Liberal government has failed to respond to the Bissonnette decision, disregarding the impact that this decision will have on families of victims of some of Canada's most heinous murderers.

Accordingly, petitioners call on Parliament to expeditiously pass Bill S-281, named in honour of Brian Ilesic who was murdered in an armed robbery at the University of Alberta. It is a modest response to the Bissonnette decision that puts victims first by preventing convicted murderers from applying for parole every year after serving their minimum sentence.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I give a shout-out to Kaylee Erickson, who was really behind this petition which reached almost 1,000 signatures. The petition says that the crime rate in Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies continues to rise and poses a significant threat to public safety and community well-being. Many residents in the cities of Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Prince George and surrounding communities feel unsafe in their own neighbourhoods due to the increase in drive-by shootings and drug-related crime. They state that rural communities should not have to accept the violent, financial, societal and economic consequences of the government's lack of action in addressing crime.

The petition asks the government to repeal soft-on-crime catch-and-release policies; end the decriminalization of hard drugs; stop the tax-funded handout of hard drugs; and, lastly, invest money in treatment and recovery and bring our loved ones home, drug-free.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of petitions to present today.

The first petition is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about political discrimination. They are calling on the House of Commons to adopt Bill C-257. This bill seeks to add protection against political discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act. The petitioners also note that Canadians face political discrimination and call for the government to quickly pass this bill and defend the rights of all Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I have to present today comes from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the comments made by Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians, recommending that euthanasia be expanded to babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with serious deformities and syndromes.

This proposal for the legalization of the killing of infants is deeply disturbing to many Canadians and infanticide is always wrong. The folks who have signed this petition call on the Government of Canada to block any attempts to allow the killing of children.

PRISON NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, correctional officers in my riding are calling upon the Government of Canada to eradicate the prison needle exchange and all other programs and policies that turn a blind eye to the rampant drug use in federal institutions in our country. Inmates in federal institutions are often there for drug-related crimes. It does not make sense for the government to turn a blind eye to these criminal activities in our institutions, which compromise the safety of our correctional officers. Petitioners are calling upon the government to eliminate these programs, to protect correctional officers and ensure public safety in our institutions.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal member across the way would like me to keep it short. I will never be silenced when speaking on behalf of my constituents.

The first petition I would like to table is regarding the ongoing horrific persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. In particular, I want to join colleagues in drawing attention to particular cases of individual practitioners who either are Canadian or who have close connections to Canada, in particular to note the tragic, immoral imprisonment of He Lizhong, one of a number of Falun Gong practitioners who have close connections to Canada who are unjustly imprisoned as part of this persecution campaign.

I want to call for the release of He Lizhong, as well as others that colleagues have mentioned. The persecution of Falun Gong practitioners has now been going on for decades, despite the fact that Falun Gong practitioners simply wish to practise a spiritual discipline and various meditation exercises emphasizing the virtues of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. Prominent Canadians have been involved in research that has revealed forced organ harvesting as part of the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. Petitioners would like to see the House and the government do more to combat forced organ harvesting and the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in general.

• (1340)

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, next, I would like to table a petition in support of the private member's bill, Bill C-257. This bill proposes to add political belief or activity to the Canadian Human Rights Act

Routine Proceedings

as prohibited grounds for discrimination. Right now we cannot discriminate against someone on various named criteria but there is no prohibition against discriminating against someone on the basis of their political views. Political discrimination can also particularly undermine the free flow of ideas and debate within a democratic society and it is in the best interests of Canadian democracy, petitioners note, to protect public debate and the exchange of differing ideas by acting to combat political discrimination.

Petitioners therefore call on the House to support Bill C-257 and to defend the rights of all Canadians to freely and peacefully express their political opinions.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, next, I am tabling a petition raising concern about proposals to further expand the already very troubling euthanasia regime in this country. The House has heard calls to expand euthanasia to include children. In particular, one Louis Roy from the Quebec college of physicians recommended expanding euthanasia to include “babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes.”

Petitioners note that this proposal for legalized killing of infants is deeply disturbing to many Canadians, that infanticide is always wrong and that we are already seeing so many abuses and targeting of vulnerable people within Canada's legalized euthanasia regime. Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to allow the killing of children in Canada as part of the euthanasia system.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, next, I would like to table another petition regarding the ongoing detention in a Chinese prison of Huseyin Celil. Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen. He is a Uyghur human rights activist. He was taken from Uzbekistan and sent to China decades ago. He has four sons who live in Canada, the youngest of whom he has never had the opportunity to meet. This is a terrible, tragic situation that underlines the evil of the CCP regime and the horrors that it inflicts upon people who simply wish to speak out for justice and human rights, including Canadian citizens.

We must do more here in Canada to draw attention to the case of Mr. Celil and to push for his release. Petitioners want to see the Government of Canada take the following steps. They want to see the government demand the recognition of Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will remind the hon. member to make a very short presentation of each petition. We do not need the list of all the required actions.

Also, can he move his phone from near the microphone?

The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it was just in case I got a call in the middle of tabling petitions. I have turned it off, in all seriousness.

Privilege

This petition is about seeking the release of Mr. Celil. Petitioners want the House to formally state that the release of Mr. Celil from detention is a priority for the Canadian government and is of equal concern to the unjust detention of the two Michaels. They would like to see the appointment of a special envoy working on Mr. Celil's release. They would like to see the Government of Canada engage with the American administration and seek its assistance in pursuing this release.

• (1345)

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, finally, I would like to table a petition opposing the Liberal government's attack on natural health products. Petitioners are deeply concerned about the attack we are seeing on natural health products, which was part of the last budget, and how the Liberals have increasingly taken steps to make natural health products more expensive and less accessible and to undermine the natural health product industry.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to reverse the changes that were brought in as part of the last Liberal budget.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 30 consideration of the motion, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Louis-Philippe Sauvé (LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is an opportunity and a privilege to rise in the House today to make my maiden speech.

It is an opportunity because the result of the by-election in my riding came as a surprise, to say the least, to all observers. For me, this journey began with an eclipse and ended with a full moon. Although I worked very hard, I feel so lucky to have been elected that, quite frankly, I really feel that the stars aligned. Ultimately, we eclipsed our opponents. Let us face it, this is a huge victory for the separatist cause, but above all, it is a victory for the supporters. It proves that by getting involved, people can make a difference. It is also a privilege that my constituents, my 78,000 or so bosses, are giving me today to speak on their behalf and be their voice in Ottawa.

In fact, that is exactly why we are here today, to discuss a question of privilege. I hope the House will allow me the privilege of taking a moment to thank the people in my riding from the bottom of my heart for placing their trust in me.

I had a great time travelling around the southwest during this campaign. I got to chat with Bloc Québécois members along the last avenues of LaSalle. I got to drink a beer with the Knights of Columbus in the "Bronx". I got to eat a sub with locals at the famous LaSalle Drive-In. I loved rediscovering Ville-Émard and Côte-Saint-Paul, where I hung out when I was younger, with my friend Yohan Painchaud, the cousin of Joel, another Magdalen Islander. I want to thank the people of the Magdalen Islands for their vital support.

I had so much fun saying hello to people at the Maxi on Laurendeau Boulevard and listening to what they had to say. A lot of running goes on during an election campaign. In Ville-Émard—Côte-Saint-Paul, we ran down Maricourt Street and Biencourt Street. Sometimes we even jogged down Jogues Street. When we got hungry, we stopped for a great big Buck Burger at Dilallo's on Allard Street.

What can I say about Verdun? Verdun, the victorious. Verdun, my home, where I met my sweetheart. A lot of people talk about how chic and cool Verdun is. I love everything about my city, but there is another Verdun, one that nobody talks about, and I want to speak for that Verdun today. I love the Verdun of the people, the Verdun with the Maxi, the Verdun with the Zappy, the Verdun of the poor, the Verdun of seniors, the old Verdun, the Verdun with stucco and Gyproc buildings. That is my Verdun. That Verdun must never change and never go away, because the people of Verdun are the heart and soul of this tight-knit community. I will always think about that Verdun whenever I talk about the housing crisis.

English is the official language of 27% of people in my riding. It is safe to say that one in three of my constituents is anglophone. I would like to say a few words to acknowledge them. As I told CJAD radio, I want to be a bridge between Quebec's English-speaking minority and its French-speaking majority. I will never abandon my principles, but I believe that there is room for dialogue. During the campaign, I met many anglophones who, surprisingly, voted for me. I am thinking of Mr. Bellefeuille on Egan avenue, who, despite his French-sounding name, is completely anglophone. We talked about his personal history and the assimilation in his family. It made me realize, and I think it made him realize too, just how fragile the French language is on the shores of the St. Lawrence. He voted for me, because I am a local guy and a true Verdun native. I am also thinking of several anglophones in their early forties whom I met on Monk Boulevard and who told me about their support for the French fact and their desire to learn French. I am also thinking about Mrs. Berman on Argyle Street, a Jewish woman from Great Britain, who told me about how much she admired René Lévesque's integrity. Clearly, the memory of our former premier still lives on in Verdun's English-speaking community.

• (1350)

I am also thinking about an elderly lady of Irish origin who, despite being a Liberal, also told me how much she admired René Lévesque. I think Mr. Lévesque had a lot of respect for the English-speaking community, and that is why people in that community respect him. I think we need to follow his example. Finally, I will never forget the elderly woman from Wales who told me how much the cost of living and rising housing prices are affecting her quality of life. In the autumn of her life, she cannot buy meat or even afford cab fare to the Anglican Church of the Epiphany on Wellington Street. It is deeply unfair that people who worked all their lives should end up living in squalor in their later years. Those on the other side of the House should pay closer attention to the Bloc's proposals about seniors. The Bloc Québécois has lost confidence in the Liberal-NDP coalition for this very important reason. These are people I met, real people, and I will never forget them. I want them to know that I am here to work for them and with them.

Now, on to today's topic. We have been debating a question of privilege for several weeks now. At this point, the debate has become a time-wasting tactic that will in no way increase the public's esteem for Parliament. We are the people's elected representatives, and we have a responsibility to the people. Our conduct must be exemplary and our interventions relevant in order that we might instill confidence in our institutions and the democratic process. We must constantly prove to the people that we are here to work for the common good.

Let us get back to the matter at hand. I will begin by contrasting some of the essential features of our political system with the government's attitude. I will convey what the people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun have to say. Then I will return to the substance of the matter and the conclusions we can draw.

Let me remind members of a fundamental principle of the British parliamentary system, namely the supremacy of Parliament. The executive branch is subordinate to the legislative branch. To avoid a dictatorship, but also to ensure good governance, the House, and the opposition in particular, have a role to play in scrutinizing spending on our behalf. They also have a role to play in holding the government to account for its decisions. Without that, there is no democracy. If I were one of the members on both sides of the House who say that my party is useless, I would be ashamed to say such things, because the Bloc Québécois takes this role seriously, and we believe that the people of Quebec will once again reward us with their trust for this reason. What are we doing as legislators? For weeks now, we have not actually been legislating, because this government refuses to respect one of the pillars of the current constitutional order.

Before I get to the substance of my remarks, I would like to digress one last time to talk about my riding, because this issue raises fundamental questions about the overall conduct of the government, which is accountable to the House. Far be it from me to comment on the internal affairs of the Liberal caucus, as the Leader of the Opposition has so clumsily done in recent days. Still, I owe it to my constituents and the public to explain what it means for them to have elected me on September 16.

Privilege

The people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun elected me because they wanted to send Ottawa a strong message. Here is that message. Throughout my campaign, I rallied the dissatisfied, the disgruntled, the people who are fed up with “he who must not be named”. I entered into a contract in French and English with my constituents. I told them that if they were tired of the Prime Minister leading the Liberal-NDP government, if they wanted to send him a clear message, they should put their trust in me, because the NDP was blindly supporting the Liberal Party and because the Conservative candidate simply would not get enough votes to win the riding. I repeated that thousands of times, too many times not to say it again in the House today.

• (1355)

If I can be blunt, the people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun want the Prime Minister to go. That is what our by-election victory meant. He needs to give up and resign immediately. That is the message I came here to deliver today, and it is not from me, but from the people who elected me. I had to pass that message on to the House, whether my colleagues like it or not. I hope that is clear, and I will not be commenting further on who should or should not be leading Canada. After all, that could be considered foreign interference.

Let me end my speech by addressing the substance of the motion. The House compelled the production of documents. A member raised a question of privilege, and the chair found a *prima facie* case. Since that time, members have been talking non-stop, like Treebeard. The government told us, not without reason, that the RCMP does not want the documents because obtaining them in such an unusual way, through an order from the House of Commons, could compromise the evidence. It is certainly a valid argument, but that is not what the motion says.

The motion instructs the government and the Auditor General to deposit the SDTC documents with the law clerk of the House, who will review them confidentially and provide them to the RCMP. The RCMP is not obliged to accept them. I say, the government should let them decide and should just comply with the order issued by the House, period. We have been stalled for three weeks now because of the government's stubborn refusal to honour the Constitution and parliamentary privilege. Actually, we have been stalled for nine years.

Is Parliament supreme in this country? The government's answer to that is clear as can be. It is the same answer given by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and his Constitution, which was rammed down our throats: utter contempt. The answer is no. As I see it, this is contempt of Parliament, contempt of parliamentarians, contempt of the people as sovereign, and contempt of democratic principles. How many times will the government tax our patience? Enough is enough. The government must deposit the documents immediately and end this charade.

Statements by Members

I would like to end on a positive note. The day I was elected, I said that love conquers all. I am sure of it. I think it is the essential ingredient of our democracy. It is also what gives us the strength to fight off despotism, because a voluntary citizen-driven movement is much more powerful than the crushing weight of fascism. Love of country, true patriotism, the love that the citizens have for the good of their community, is the best thing about our form of government, and it is much more powerful than the greed of tyrants. The love that political adversaries can show for one another, despite their differing views, is proof of whether a democracy will survive. Above all, the love of elected officials for their constituents is essential. We must always show those we love that we are here for them and that our hearts are in the right place.

We must never fear the people. We must stand by them. That is our responsibility. Their responsibility is to trust us in spite of our flaws, because we are human, too human. Where there are humans, there is human nature. I ask the people to have sympathy for their representatives.

I said that the Bloc Québécois victory in Verdun was a victory for separatists. Fighting for Quebec independence is my calling in life. It is a unique opportunity to finally secure our freedom. Quebecers and Canadians cannot love each other when we are part of the same country, so we must go our separate ways. We tried unsuccessfully to get along with each other with the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords and after the referendums. Canada does not want to change, and neither do we. Like its Parliament, this country is not working anymore. It is time to start afresh, with each—

• (1400)

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun. He will have six minutes to continue his speech next time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NATURE CONSERVATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today under Standing Order 31 to praise and thank the extraordinary volunteer efforts of conservation organizations within Saanich—Gulf Islands, and in particular, the Peninsula Streams Society and the Saanich Inlet Protection Society.

I want to speak particularly to the testimony given on behalf of Friends of Shoal Harbour by Bob Peart just this last Monday, October 28, to our fisheries committee. It is very clear evidence. It needs to be said out loud and with urgency that, as Mr. Peart said, “Our harbours are filled with derelict and abandoned boats. The situation is [totally] out of control”. The solutions are in his testimony: The government needs to enforce existing acts; we need to deal with the mess left by Harper on the treatment of buoys as minor works.

We can act and protect the Salish Sea. The government just needs to do its job.

KOREAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a historic milestone, Korean Heritage Month, which we have celebrated in the last month.

Willowdale proudly hosts the largest Korean community in our country, so this is profoundly significant for everyone in my riding. The unanimous support of the Senate has meant that October has become a time for our country to honour the rich contributions and enduring spirit of the Korean Canadian community across Canada.

A few weeks ago, many of us here in Ottawa participated in the first flag-raising ceremony on Parliament Hill, alongside Senator Yonah Martin, Ambassador Lim of the Korean Republic and our brave Canadian veterans of the war. Their sacrifices remind us of the strength of our shared history.

We should all be celebrating Korean Heritage Month.

* * *

FUNDRAISERS IN SOURIS—MOOSE MOUNTAIN

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during these times of economic uncertainty and financial challenges, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the incredible generosity of the people of Souris—Moose Mountain and to thank them for all they do to give back to their communities.

Two weeks ago, United Way Estevan held its annual telethon, with a goal of raising \$348,000 to support the organization's member agencies. It blew that goal out of the water and raised a new off-air record of over \$380,000 in pledges and donations by the end of the 33-hour event.

The following weekend was the Weyburn Communion, which was also filled with performances that showcased some of the local talent from the area. An incredible \$92,000 was raised that day alone, and donations continue to roll in.

I sincerely thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make these fundraisers happen, as well as all the businesses and people who continue to donate to these great causes. I am extremely proud and grateful to represent them here in the House.

* * *

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish the Sikh, Hindu, Jain and Buddhist community across Canada a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

Also known as the festival of lights, it is the largest festival celebrated in Brampton. During Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas, communities come together by gathering with their loved ones; lighting diyas; visiting gurdwaras, mandirs and temples; and exchanging sweets and gifts.

*Statements by Members***DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS**

As we celebrate, we are reminded of the rich diversity that is the strength of Canada. I have had the immense honour to visit countless Diwali melas, eating more sweets than my dentist would like. It is the time of year I always look forward to.

I ask all members in the House to please join me in wishing everyone celebrating a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

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[*Translation*]

SPECIAL OLYMPICS QUEBEC 2025

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I met with delegations from across Quebec during their visit to Granby, host of the next Special Olympics Quebec. This athletic event will feature more than 1,050 athletes from 12 to 70 years of age with intellectual disabilities or autism, accompanied by more than 400 coaches and 100 officials. About 3,000 visitors are expected to attend what is sure to be an unforgettable and enriching event rooted in strong values.

In fact, the whole committee is going to work hard to promote these athletes and help them excel in all 10 athletic disciplines on the program. From the opening to the closing ceremony, from the passing of the torch and awarding of the medals, emotion will definitely fill the air during the competitions. The slogan, “Granby, a bold city where multi-talented athletes shine” aptly sums up the desire to make these special athletes shine, while recognizing their skills and self-determination.

To all competitors: see you next summer. I will be there to cheer them on. They should be proud.

* * *

• (1405)

GRATITUDE TO CANADIANS IN UNIFORM

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges to thank and honour all those in uniform who have served Canadians and those who continue to serve us to this day. I also want to thank and honour their families, who bear the burden of the sacrifices these women and men make every day.

[*English*]

I honour veterans from my community. There is Maxine Brett; 80 years ago, in World War II, she served in the Canadian Armed Forces as a nurse. There is Lieutenant Edward Duckworth; 25 years ago, in Bosnia, he served as an armoured crewman as part of Operation Palladium. There is Lieutenant Lynn Murdoch-Feingold, who left port just 15 days ago on the HMCS *Ottawa* for the Indo-Pacific region. She and 240 fellow armed forces members will join regional partners and allies to promote a stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region and help enforce UN sanctions imposed on North Korea.

I wish Lieutenant Murdoch-Feingold, and all those who are actively serving Canada around the world, a successful mission and a safe return home. I thank them for their service.

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists from across Canada and around the world celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights.

Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas symbolize the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. The stories and traditions may vary, but their universal message continues to unite people from all walks of life. This is more important today than ever.

As we continue to see many struggling in our communities and so much darkness and pain around the world, Diwali inspires us all to look forward with hope and optimism. Diwali is particularly special for my family this year, as it will be the first time my two sons, Arvin and Ayvan, will light diyas together, celebrating Ayvan's first Diwali.

I also look forward to celebrating Diwali on Parliament Hill and across our beautiful country with our Conservative leader and our great colleagues. Conservatives will always stand up for our shared values of faith, family and freedom. To all those celebrating, I say happy Diwali.

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JUDI WEINSTEIN AND GADI HAGGAI

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Iris Weinstein Haggai, whose parents, Judi Weinstein and Gadi Haggai, were taken hostage and murdered by Hamas following the October 7 terrorist attack in Israel.

Iris's mother, Judi, grew up in Toronto before moving to Israel in the 1970s, where she raised their family in the Nir Oz kibbutz. Judi was a daughter, mother and grandmother who loved her community. She taught children and wrote poetry.

Judi was a Canadian, and her life exemplified Canadian values. For over a year, Iris has fought for justice for her mother and for the rights of families of the victims to see their loved ones returned home. I applaud her courage and call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to do everything in her power to secure the repatriation of Canadians who were victims of the October 7 terrorist attacks.

When I met with Iris, she asked that everyone remember and say her mother's name. I hope all members and, indeed, all Canadians will remember this name: Judi Weinstein. We must bring her and all the hostages home now.

*Statements by Members***LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH**

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this November, we mark our second annual Lebanese Heritage Month in Canada.

As a Lebanese Canadian, I am proud to have sponsored and shepherded the bill into law, and I invite all to celebrate this special occasion. I encourage all Canadians to connect with their local Lebanese communities, attend an event, share a meal, listen to our vibrant music, and experience the pride and passion that define Lebanese heritage.

Lebanese communities across Canada and around the world are hurting as a result of war and conflicts in the Middle East. I reiterate my call for an immediate ceasefire and peace in the region. It is my wish that this month becomes a symbol of hope and joy. I invite all to join us on the seventh as we raise the Lebanese flag on Parliament Hill and sing “Lebanon will be back”.

Happy Lebanese Heritage Month.

[*Translation*]

I wish everyone a happy Lebanese Heritage Month.

* * *

• (1410)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HOSTAGES IN GAZA

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, a tragedy shames our nation.

Judi Weinstein, a proud Canadian, was the only Canadian hostage still held by Hamas in Gaza. A beloved teacher, Judi and her husband were brutally murdered and taken hostage in the savage attacks on October 7. For 83 days, Judi's family waited in agony, unsure of her fate.

Since that horrific day, Judi and her husband's deceased bodies have been held as human currency, depriving their family of closure. The United States has already taken action. It has issued indictments against Hamas perpetrators, against terrorists responsible for attacks upon Americans.

Where is the Prime Minister? He is nowhere. He and his foreign affairs minister have failed to confront Hamas terrorists at every turn. We have demanded that Judi be brought home and that terrorists be indicted. The world is watching. Today, Judi's daughter, Iris, is here in Ottawa. We stand with her.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the deeply disturbing realization that the Indian government has been interfering in Canada's democracy, including with the murder of a Canadian citizen and intimidation of many others, how can anyone trust the Conservative leader to protect Canadians? He will not get the same security clearance as all other party leaders have.

The Conservative leader knows full well that the NSICOP report indicates that there was foreign interference in the last two Conser-

vative Party leadership races. Okay, so we understand that he is not willing to stand up to protect Canadians or our democratic institutions. That is no surprise. However, one would think he would at least be willing to step up to protect his own Conservative MPs.

Conservatives love to say that sunlight is the best disinfectant, but their leader prefers to dwell in ignorance. I am starting to think that the Conservative leader is so untrustworthy that he does not even trust himself with the intelligence.

On behalf of Canadians, I say that he should step up, be responsible, show some leadership and get the security clearance. Anything less is utterly shameful.

* * *

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is the Prime Minister's top guy. When even Liberal MPs are lining up to take the Prime Minister down, the PM knows he can still count on the leader of the NDP to have his back. In fact, there is no bigger supporter of the failed Liberal policies than the NDP leader. He supports the Liberals' carbon tax, which sent more than two million Canadians to the food bank. He supports the Liberals' inflationary deficits, which resulted in fewer jobs and smaller paycheques for Canadians. He supports the Liberals' catch-and-release policies, which have increased violent crime by 50%.

Instead of putting country before party, the NDP leader is putting his pension above everything else. It seems that the costly coalition is as strong as ever, despite all the NDP leader's blustering. The sell-out leader of the NDP will say and do anything to keep the Prime Minister in power and prevent Canadians from voting in a carbon tax election.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reports on the death of the NDP-Liberal coalition have been greatly exaggerated. Despite the leader of the NDP's prank on the voters of Elmwood—Transcona, Canadians see the truth. Like an unkillable zombie from a Halloween horror show, the Marxist coalition is coming for our souls.

Statements by Members

The NDP's support for the Liberal agenda is making life deadly. The NDP voted for the carbon tax 24 times. These junior Marxists support the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending and Liberal Party corruption. These far-left radicals demanded the soft-on-crime policies that have fuelled the terrifying rise in violent crime. Every day the Prime Minister remains in power, it is because the leader of the NDP sold out Canadians. He offers tricks with no treats.

As we watch the Liberal Party tear itself apart from the inside, Canadians will face a choice when they finally get their carbon tax election: common-sense Conservatives or more corruption on the road to communism.

* * *

● (1415)

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one million Canadians have been able to get the dental care they need, and that number will continue to rise with the over 48,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are now approved to receive care, thanks to our government's Canadian dental care plan.

Our government understands that oral care is health care, and it is delivering dental care to keep Canadians healthy and reduce the strain on our health care system. We will ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have access to oral care through the Canadian dental care plan, a program that the Conservatives have blocked at every step.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after three decades of Conservative and Liberal government failures, Canada's community housing stock is the lowest among the G7 countries. There are about 5,000 people in the Lower Mainland who do not have a place to call home. They have little choice but to try to survive on the street or in encampments. However, what is abundantly clear is that forced evictions do not fix anything; they just make the unhoused more homeless. People need dignity, not decampment.

CRAB Park's tent city residents have travelled from Vancouver East to Ottawa this week for the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference. They want to see a tiny home village develop on the vacant port of Vancouver parking lot. The federal government can take immediate action and invest in this solution to help end homelessness. Moreover, this can be replicated from coast to coast to coast, in communities large and small.

Talk is cheap. It is time to realize housing as a basic human right.

* * *

[Translation]

PHILIPPE GIROUX

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the exceptional work of a visual artist from Matane named Philippe Giroux.

His work has long resonated with people outside our region, but now he can add prestigious international recognition to that list. On October 6, the Société académique Arts-Sciences-Lettres de Paris awarded Philippe Giroux the gold medal for his body of work.

The ordinary guy from back home who paints our rivers, and more specifically the Matane River and its wildlife, is a true ambassador for the region. His works have found homes all over the world, including the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom and the Bahamas. Over the years, the painter-who-fishes has garnered dozens of international awards and widespread recognition. In fact, the Mondial Art Academia has honoured him for several of his paintings.

Philippe is a source of pride for our region. I thank him for showcasing our part of the country as magnificently as he does. I congratulate him and wish him all the best for the future.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an amazing and exciting announcement. The Conservative Party of Canada will cut the federal tax on all new homes under \$1 million. The headlines and reviews of this smart policy are in, and they are fabulous. The West End Home Builders Association says it is “the most significant housing policy commitment made in the past two decades.” The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness says, “This is smart.” Habitat for Humanity says eliminating GST would reduce costs. BILD GTA says this is “a significant step forward in helping housing affordability.” LiUNA, the biggest construction union local in North America, says, “This is good policy.” The Residential Construction Council of Ontario says that “it will save buyers tens of thousands of dollars on the purchase of a new home”.

There is more. Mike Moffatt, economist and founding director of Place Centre, says, “I admire the boldness here. This will get more housing built.” There is so much more to say, but sadly, I am out of time. Here is the bottom line: The NDP-Liberals will increase taxes on housing. Conservatives will cut them and build the homes.

*Oral Questions***DENTAL CARE**

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the number of the day is one million. That is one million Canadians who now have received oral health care through the Canadian dental care plan. That is one million Canadians, many of whom are seniors living in our communities, who visited a dental hygienist, a dentist or a denturist, many for the very first time. They are now getting access to dental care, as they should, so their health can improve.

However, the leader of the Conservative Party argues that this program, somehow, does not exist and he wants to cut it. He would deprive millions of Canadians from getting good oral health care through the Canadian dental care plan. We are proud to have brought in this program that is now serving one million Canadians who live in all of our communities.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Statistics Canada revealed today that Canada's economy grew by a paltry 1% in the third quarter. This is a third less than expected, and two thirds less than the United States. Our per capita GDP has fallen in eight of the last nine quarters. In fact, our GDP per capita has dropped faster than any other G7 nation.

Is this not hard proof that doubling the debt and increasing taxes on capital gains are destroying our economy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is the Conservative leader looking for some good news? Interest rates are down, inflation is down, and unemployment is down.

Today is Halloween, and the one thing scaring the kids is the Conservative leader's refusal to get his security clearance to protect Canadians and members of his caucus.

When will he answer the question on the minds of kids everywhere today?

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what scares people is that their paycheques are getting smaller every year. Their paycheques mean that they cannot afford to buy a house since this government has doubled the cost of housing.

This minister went looking for affordable housing in his city. He could not find any, after nine years of his government doubling the cost. When I was minister, we built 194,000 affordable housing units. Now, we are proposing to eliminate the GST on new housing.

Will he accept my common-sense plan?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the children in my riding are smarter than the Conservative leader gives them credit for. They can count to six. Six is the number of affordable housing units the Conservative leader built, not in my riding, but across the country, during his entire term as minister responsible for housing at the time.

Once again, the kids want to know whether they should be afraid of him, since he appears incapable of getting the security clearance needed to protect his own MPs.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reported terrible news for the Canadian economy today. It grew at a meagre 1%, a third lower than foreseen and less than our population grew. In fact, it was the eighth out of the last nine economic quarters in which our per capita GDP shrunk. It has fallen more than any other G7 country's since the year before COVID. This is the direct result of higher taxes on capital gains, on energy and on work.

Why will the Liberals not accept our common-sense plan? Better yet, why do they not call a carbon tax election so we can fix the economy?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the leader of the official opposition does not like facts getting in the way of his good Halloween story, but here are the facts: with 1.6% inflation, the Bank of Canada governor—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is important for members to be able to follow and for the Chair to be able to follow what is being said. I am having difficulty hearing. I know people who are using translation devices are also having difficulty.

The hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, from the top, please.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of chocolate being consumed on the other side; we can see how energized the Conservatives are. They are upset because we are sharing the facts: 1.6% inflation in this country, interest rates are down, 47,000 new jobs in the last month and the International Monetary Fund has Canada positioned as the fastest-growing economy in the G7 in 2025.

We are also going to keep supporting Canadians and we are going to build houses from coast to coast. The Conservatives do not need to like it, but that is how we are supporting Canadians each and every day.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the American economy is roaring while the Canadian economy is snoring. In the most recently reported economic quarter, U.S. GDP grew three times faster than Canada's, despite our out-of-control population growth. In fact, per person income is lower than it was 10 years ago in Canada, while it has gone up by 18% in the U.S. The gap between U.S. and Canadian incomes is worse than at any time in the last century.

Why will the government not call a carbon tax election so Canadians can vote for powerful paycheques that buy affordable homes on safe streets?

• (1425)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite surprising that the Leader of the Opposition is not taking the bare facts on board, and not just 1.6% inflation or 47,000 jobs. Let us go to what he is trying to distract Canadians from, which is that as leader of the official opposition, as somebody who wants to someday sit on this side of the House, he will simply not go and do the work to get his security clearance. He will not protect his MPs; he will not protect Canadians. Shame on him. He should get his security clearance.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's collapsing per-person economy means lower wages, which means Canadians can afford less food and less housing, and governments can afford less for schools and hospitals. This is the direct result. These are the first economic data points that have come out since the government jacked up the capital gains tax now driving billions of dollars south of the border.

Why do the Liberals not follow our common-sense plan to axe taxes? In fact, in addition to getting rid of the carbon tax, why do they not follow our plan to axe the GST on new homes to build 30,000 more per year? It is common sense. Let us bring it home.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can do the facts game all day long. Let us just focus. The Leader of the Opposition likes to remind people that he has roots in Alberta, so let us talk about the Liberal government's investments in Alberta: \$22 billion in clean energy investments for clean electricity, for hydrogen, for greening the grid and for making sure we have the greenest barrel of oil in the world. We are third in the world for foreign direct investment. We are number one in the world for per capita foreign direct investment. The Conservatives do not want to tell Canadians about it. We will, and we will make sure there are good jobs from coast to coast to coast.

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[Translation]

SENIORS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' decision to abandon seniors is heartless. The insinuations that seniors are too rich to deserve a pension increase are shameful.

There are seniors in Quebec whose pension is their only source of income. These people do not have any financial leeway to deal

with rent increases. They do not have a rainy day fund to deal with the cost of replacing a vehicle, even with a used one. They are putting food back on the shelves at the supermarket.

Why would the Liberals rather risk an election than help seniors?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time we have put forward measures to help seniors, the Bloc Québécois voted against them. Even when it comes to dental care, which is very popular in the member's riding, I heard the Bloc leader describe this initiative as poison. That is very odd.

I would encourage the Bloc Québécois to think carefully about what it is doing, rather than paving the way forward for the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec lieutenant is against increasing the pensions by 10% because among those 65 to 74 there are rich people like him who do not need it.

That is not true. Rich people like him are seeing their pensions reduced by clawback taxes. The government is already paying the 10% increase to people 75 and up. It is universal. If the Liberals think that it is good enough for people 75 and up, then it is good enough for those 74 and under.

Why are the Liberals treating one million Quebec seniors like second-class citizens?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is looking for problems with the Liberals' approach.

What we have done since 2015 to help seniors is important. We have reduced seniors poverty by roughly 20% through measures that the Bloc and the Conservatives voted against.

Now, they are looking for friends. Let me warn them that having Conservatives as friends in the House of Commons is dangerous for Quebecers. The Conservatives want to cut everything that exists, including the Canadian dental care plan that is helping 900,000 seniors, as we speak, have affordable and accessible dental care.

* * *

• (1430)

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of renters are worried that their landlords might be using YieldStar software to collude in fixing and increasing the rents they charge.

Oral Questions

In the U.S.A., the FBI launched an investigation into this software. Yieldstar is known to be used by large landlords in Canada. However, the Liberals and the Conservatives refuse to investigate the matter in order to protect the profits of these large landlords.

Are the Liberals going to stand up for renters and launch an investigation to discover whether landlords are colluding to jack up rents?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The practice he described is completely unacceptable. I am going to write to the Commissioner of Competition today to ask for an inquiry. With the new powers we gave to the Competition Bureau, we will get to the bottom of this issue.

People at home know that we, on this side of the House, will always side with tenants, will always side with consumers, and will always side with Canadians. This is an important issue and we are going to stand up for Canadians.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is always the way with the Liberals: behind the scenes, non-transparent gentlemen's agreements. Let us get this out in the open.

Canadian renters are struggling with skyrocketing rents. Tenants are calling on the government to investigate the potential use of AI software by their corporate landlords to hike rents. The same AI software is under investigation by the FBI in the United States, yet the Liberals and the Conservatives have stood by greedy corporate landlords by refusing to investigate.

Will the Liberals support an investigation into the use of AI in rent-fixing and protect Canadians from illegal rent gouging?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish my colleague had heard my answer. We are going to launch an investigation. That is exactly what I said.

It is completely unacceptable what we have seen. I am going to write to the competition commissioner today to launch an investigation. The NDP should celebrate what we have done, because thanks to our party, we now have powers within the act to investigate.

We will always be on the side of renters, we will always be on the side of consumers and we will always be on the side of Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have more bad news from experts. New StatsCan data shows that per-person GDP is shrinking again. For the eighth time in the last nine quarters, Canadians are getting poorer.

This is a made-in-Canada per capita recession that has lasted two years, caused by a government that has driven out investment by

hiking taxes on everything: income, financial institutions, housing, fuel and investment. The opposite is happening elsewhere. Yesterday, the U.S. commerce department said that the U.S. economy grew at 2.8% last quarter.

Will the government admit that this is a made-in-Canada per capita recession?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems the Conservatives cannot see past their own doomsday narrative. Canada leads the G7 in reaching a soft landing in the global post-pandemic surge in inflation and interest rates. It is the first G7 country to cut interest rates not once, not twice, not three times, but four times in a row. This is good news for homeowners who currently have mortgages that need renewal and for first-time homebuyers.

Inflation fell to 1.6% in September, marking nine consecutive months within the Bank of Canada's target range. I count that as good news for Canadians.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is another expert from the Bank of Canada: senior deputy governor Carolyn Rogers. On March 24, she issued a stark warning. She said that Canada is falling behind other countries because of weak business investment, a lack of competition and a failure to integrate immigrants into the workforce, all responsibilities of the government. She said, "I'm saying that it's an emergency—it's time to break the glass."

I have a simple question. Does the government agree with the Bank of Canada that we are in an economic emergency of its making?

• (1435)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada governor has reported numerous times that our government has stuck to its fiscal guardrails and, through that discipline, has allowed for inflation to drop in this country.

The IMF, in its World Economic Outlook, projects Canada will have the highest growth in the G7 in 2025. Also, wages in Canada have outpaced inflation for 20 months in a row. For Canadians, that means more jobs, better wages and a higher living standard.

We should be positive. I will never apologize for being positive about the future of this country.

TAXATION

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new data from StatsCan confirms a made-in-Canada GDP recession. Over eight of the last nine quarters, per capita GDP was in decline. To put that in practical terms, the average American now earns \$20,000 more than the average Canadian.

The root cause is the Prime Minister's tax hikes. When will he axe the tax hikes that are making Canadians poorer?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the Conservatives something they will not acknowledge: The root cause of our success is Canadian workers. We have attracted record levels of investment in this country.

I do not know what those people are reading. They should talk to Volkswagen, talk to Honda, talk to Dow Chemical—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will call to order the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

I will invite the hon. minister to start again.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I will always stand up in the House to talk about good news in Canada. Canadians should be cheering. This is the land of possibilities and opportunities.

We have attracted a record level of investment in this country. Just talk to the CEOs of Honda, Volkswagen, Dow Chemical and Northvolt. People are investing in this country because they believe in our workers. We have the best workers in the world. We have critical minerals. We have energy. We have access to markets. We have what we need to win in the 21st century.

The Speaker: Before returning the floor to the hon. member for Durham, I am going to ask for the second time that the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets not take the floor unless recognized by the Chair.

The hon. member for Durham.

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals across the aisle are having a party or some kind of celebration, it seems, but in the process, they are cutting the standard of living in Canada. They are slashing the quality of life for people in our country. It is their tax hikes, like their increases in the capital gains tax, housing taxes and the carbon tax, that are making life difficult for Canadians across the country.

When will they accept some responsibility for what has happened over the last nine years and axe the tax hikes that are making Canadians poorer?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talking about celebrations, 10 years ago today, former Conservative MP Dean Del Mastro was found guilty of violating the Elections Act. He was the leader of the Conservatives' buddy at the time. Del Mastro went on to become the parliamentary secretary to the then prime minister, and another parliamentary secretary at that time, who is now the leader of the Conservative Party, was

Oral Questions

advanced to become the minister responsible for elections. He tried to deny thousands of Canadians from being able to vote.

Why should any Canadian have confidence in the leader of the Conservative Party?

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be serious. We all know that this government is costing Canadians dearly. Now Statistics Canada has the numbers to prove it. The latest figures show that the gross domestic product per capita has declined eight times over the past nine quarters. What does that actually mean? It means that the GDP grew by barely 1% this quarter, while in the United States, it grew by nearly 3%. Because of this government, Americans are three times luckier than Canadians.

Will the government ever understand that raising taxes does not help Canadians?

• (1440)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my esteemed colleague, and he can make up all the numbers he wants, but they still will not add up, not even on Halloween. What he can do, however, is ask his colleague and seatmate, the member for Brantford—Brant, to rise in the House at least once to apologize for the anti-francophone comments he made last week.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows perfectly well that my colleague has apologized.

The reality is that he wants to divert people's attention from the economic reality. As a university professor, he should be paying attention to the facts, and he certainly cannot dispute the data from Statistics Canada or that of *The Economist*. He is probably familiar with *The Economist*. He must have read that a few times over the years.

The Economist concluded that Canada ranks below Alabama, the poorest state in the United States. Is he proud of his record?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about three realities.

First, the economic reality is that interest rates are falling, inflation rates are falling and the unemployment rate is falling.

Now let us talk about the reality that the Leader of the Opposition still does not understand this Halloween, specifically, that the Canada dental care plan exists. It did not magically disappear.

The third reality is that the member for Brantford—Brant has not yet apologized in the House.

*Oral Questions***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this Halloween, the worst house of horrors is here in Ottawa, the Canada Revenue Agency. Fraudsters got \$6 million in fraudulent tax refunds. The agency was not even able to realize that different people were being paid in the same bank account. That is not all. There is a smart guy who fudged his tax returns to try to get a \$40 million refund. The agency had time to refund him a small amount of \$10 million before the guy's bank warned the agency that something was fishy.

How many other fraudsters are there with both hands in the cookie jar?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, fraud is completely unacceptable, and I can assure my colleagues that we are taking the necessary measures to deal with the situation.

Obviously, with all the personal information it has, the Canada Revenue Agency is a prime target. However, it is not the agency that is directly targeted, but it is often the information that we, as citizens, share through various systems. As individuals, we need to be careful.

I want to assure my colleagues that the agency is very vigilant, that we have experts who are very careful and that as soon as a fraud is detected, the account is frozen and the individual is informed.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister might think this is our fault, but we want to know how many other times the Canada Revenue Agency has been a victim of fraud as a result of a lack of verification, because the CRA has been hiding the real numbers. Since 2020, the CRA has notified the Privacy Commissioner of 113 cases where taxpayers' personal information was used to commit fraud. When questioned by the media, the CRA revealed that it was not 113 cases but more than 31,000 cases. As for the Minister of National Revenue, she is a real ghost. She is refusing interview requests.

Is the government not tempted to tell the truth the first time around every once in a while?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say what I do, I do what I say and I am not hiding. However, it is important for people to know that the law prohibits the Minister of National Revenue from discussing specific cases. The CRA is very well equipped. We have experts. We are working with all kinds of specialists and with other countries to share best practices. In fact, the J5, the Joint Chiefs of Global Tax Enforcement, were in Ottawa just two weeks ago.

I want to assure my colleagues that we have the experts we need and that we are doing what needs to be done.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, fraud is on the rise at the Canada Revenue Agency because no one is doing the proper checks, including the minister, who has the power to launch investigations. Then there are the cases where the CRA is defrauding itself, as was the case with 330 employees who had to be fired because they approved themselves for CERB, the Canada emergency response benefit. The vampires were running the blood bank.

The CRA is haunted with issues of audits, accountability, transparency and leadership. It could use a little exorcism.

When is the minister going to clean house?

• (1445)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the CRA has 60,000 employees. As we went through COVID-19, there were many countries that envied us because Canada and our Liberal government did what it took to help people and businesses. That is why we bounced back so much better than many other countries in the world.

Yes, there are 60,000 employees, but everyone who received CERB was individually checked. The CRA does not gift cheques. We have taken the necessary HR measures.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just a few days after the Leader of the Opposition introduced a common-sense plan to axe the GST on new home sales, even the housing minister's own advisers were raving about the proposal. Economist Dr. Mike Moffatt said it is a "bold" plan and calls himself "a big fan" of the idea.

He and other Canadians know that housing has become out of reach, and the government has doubled its costs in this country. Will the housing minister listen to his own advisers and implement our common-sense tax cut so that Canadians can finally afford a home?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member is going to quote Mike Moffatt, she ought to include the entire quote. What he said was that if the Conservative proposal was to go ahead, they ought not propose things like getting rid of the housing accelerator fund and ought not get rid of infrastructure programs that enable housing.

If the Conservative leader does not want to listen to Liberal MPs, that is fine. He should listen to Conservative MPs, the dozen, probably more, who want the accelerator fund and have advocated for it because they know it is vital to getting more homes built.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the member should listen to the housing minister who said that his \$3 billion of housing accelerator money built zero homes. Zero is less than the 195,000 homes built under the Leader of the Opposition when he was housing minister.

Now add this to the stellar record of a guy who broke our immigration system and lost track of all the people he let in. While the Prime Minister is fighting his own caucus, he gave the minister a promotion.

When will the housing minister leave fantasyland, join the Conservatives in the real world and axe the tax so we can build the homes?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, years ago, when I worked with the Leader of the Opposition on the finance committee, he told me something that might shock everyone, that it is hard for him to make friends because of his personality. What we look at now is that he has at least one friend on the opposite side. His best friend, as I understand it, is the MP for St. Albert—Edmonton. In fact, that member has advocated for the housing accelerator fund. He went behind his leader's back. I hope it does not affect their friendship. He went behind his leader's back to advocate for the HAF, and the Conservatives want to get rid of it.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): The Liberals are not worth the cost of housing, Mr. Speaker, and many young Canadians have given up completely on their dream of home ownership.

It is why common-sense Conservatives will axe the federal sales tax on new homes. For an \$800,000 house, this tax cut would save the homebuyer \$40,000. In other words, that is \$2,200 per year in mortgage payments.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to our common-sense plan and axe the GST on housing to ensure that young Canadians can finally afford a home?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): We hear more slogans, Mr. Speaker. If we scratched the surface of that so-called idea, what would we find? The Conservatives would axe something. They would get rid of the housing accelerator fund, which is so crucial. What does it do? It provides funding for affordable housing to counter homelessness. It provides funding for zoning changes. It provides funding for housing-enabling infrastructure, for community centres and even for vacant buildings in downtown areas, so they can be converted for housing.

If the member does not believe me, he should take the word of the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola who advocated for it. He is their former finance critic who unfortunately is on the back benches because he advocates for good programs.

* * *

● (1450)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, the special interlocutor, Kimberly Murray, delivered her final report on missing and disappeared indigenous children and unmarked burials in Canada. Among the obligations was adding residential school denialism to the Criminal Code. It is an essential measure to protect survivors from incitements of hate and violence.

Oral Questions

The Attorney General accepted this report, but will he listen to survivors, adopt my bill, put an end to the incitement of hate, and implement this obligation now?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the report from the special interlocutor, which was received by the Attorney General earlier this week. It puts forward some very compelling issues that should be discussed and studied. We, as a government, are going to look into it and we will get back to both the special interlocutor, as well as Canadians, on next steps forward.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' homes have been swept away in floods and hundreds of people have died in B.C.'s heat waves. This week, The Lancet report revealed a stark escalation in health threats caused by the climate crisis.

Despite this, and against all advice, the Liberals keep handing out billions in subsidies to oil and gas companies, and the Conservatives cannot even agree if climate change is real. The health of Canadians is at stake.

Will the Liberals stop fuelling the climate crisis and end fossil fuel subsidies today?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the good news is that Canada is the only G20 country to have eliminated fossil fuel subsidies, thanks to the NDP. I would be happy to provide her office with a briefing on this.

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, dental care is health care. Today we have hit a milestone of one million Canadians who have already accessed care with our government's Canadian dental care plan.

A single visit to the dentist can cost hundreds of dollars. Canadians should not have to cancel their dental appointment because they cannot afford it.

Could the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions tell the House how the Canadian dental care plan will make life more affordable for Canadians?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we have hit a milestone across the country. A million Canadians have access to dental care services. That is certainly something of which we on this side of the House are proud.

Oral Questions

This is what we know, and here are the facts. The Conservatives continue to vote against Canadians. They vote against dental care plans. They vote against the things that make life make sense, common sense, for Canadians, whether it is dental care, whether it is affordable child care, whether it is a national school food care program.

On this side of the House, we are taking care of what matters most to Canadians.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that the carbon tax is costing Canadians more than they get back. The Prime Minister's plan to quadruple the carbon tax will cost Manitoba families an extra \$1,300 per year. Evergreen Basic Needs, a food bank in Gimli, Manitoba, has seen a 30% increase in usage since 2020.

When will the Prime Minister finally start listening to Canadians and have a carbon tax election?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying would be tragic if it were only true, which it is not. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said in his report that Canadians get more money back from carbon pricing than what they pay. He did not factor in the impacts of climate change. July and August in 2024 were the costliest months ever, the costliest year ever for climate impacts in Canada, \$7 billion in climate impacts.

What do the Conservatives have to say about that? Let the planet burn. Not on this side of the House. We will work to fight climate change and we will work to support Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that a tax plan is not an environment plan.

With the Prime Minister's out-of-touch policies and reckless spending, one quarter of Canadians are relying on food banks this fall. Sadly, this includes members of the Canadian Armed Forces who cannot afford to eat under the costly Liberal-NDP government.

Earlier this year, military personnel doing cyber training at Willis College had to rely on food banks because they could not afford to eat. At one point, college staff even had to set up a food bank to support them in the college.

Will the Prime Minister quit making life more unaffordable for our troops and call a carbon tax election?

• (1455)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard a number of Con-

servative MPs talk about Jasper. Let us talk about Jasper. Do members know much money—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister for the Environment and Climate Change from the top.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Jasper. Do members know how much the Conservatives invested in 2011 in prescribed burns and mechanical removals around Jasper? Zero dollars. They cut funding by \$30 million in 2010, 2011, all the way to 2015.

Do we know who the director to the minister of the environment was in those days? It is was the member for Thornhill—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: At some point, we are going to run out of time to have all the questions posed. The Chair cannot hear the answer. Could we allow the minister to please give his answer so that we can move on and ensure that all the questions that have been planned to be asked today are asked today?

The hon. minister from the top, please.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, for four consecutive years, the Conservative Party of Canada slashed funding for Jasper fire prevention by \$30 million every year. In the last six years alone, we have invested \$800 million. If the Conservatives want to blame someone, they can go and talk to their colleague from Thornhill, who was the director to the minister of the environment in those days.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost. The statistics are clear. Nova Scotians relying on food banks have increased by over 50% in the last five years to over 40,000 visits per month.

Another staggering report this morning shows that 40% of Atlantic Canadians are struggling to afford necessities like food, rent and home heating. The failed former minister of immigration and now-floundering Minister of Housing clearly cannot help Nova Scotians. However, there is an answer.

Will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election?

Oral Questions

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by wishing Canadians a happy Halloween. What kids should be most frightened about this Halloween is the cuts that would be made by the Conservative leader. I apologize to Johnny Depp in advance, but the leader of the Conservatives is like the Edward Scissorhands of politics.

What else is truly spooky? The Conservative leader refuses to get his security clearance to protect Canadians against foreign interference. I can only speculate that he must be concerned about the ghosts in his closet.

The Speaker: Colleagues, comparing any individual to a fictional character is not within the realms of what we do here. I will ask all members to restrain themselves from doing that.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, life is more expensive than ever.

The report of Food Banks Canada indicates over two million Canadians used food banks in March, up 6% from last year. In my riding, the Samaritan House food bank saw nearly 2,000 more people accessing their services in the last two years. Four in 10 were children. One in 10 was a senior. Despite this, the NDP-Liberals continue to increase the cost of groceries by increasing the carbon tax.

When will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election?

• (1500)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has already been answered. Let me talk about the foreign interference. The leader of the Conservative Party says not to worry, that his chief of staff has the clearance and he will tell him. The leader of the Conservative Party does not understand the law. It would be illegal for the chief of staff to give the names to the leader of the Conservative Party. It is time—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary has seven seconds left on the clock.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party does not understand it. He is asking his chief of staff to break the law. That is a bad thing. He needs to understand that breaking the law—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all parties should be outraged by the filibuster in the Senate against Bill C-282 and the protection of supply management. No one here should accept that two senators, two unelected senators, are trying to overturn an all-party majority vote in the House. It is a direct at-

tack on democracy. Peter Boehm and Peter Harder are unelected individuals who are acting like divine right monarchs.

Letting these guys get away with it means turning back the clock on three centuries of democracy. Enough is enough. Will the Prime Minister ask them to pass Bill C-282 immediately?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, it seems to me that he should also respect our institutions, regardless of what he thinks. That is important.

We are 110% in favour of supply management. We want to see this legislation pass. We supported it. Many of us in the House have tried to encourage our colleagues in the Senate to act much more quickly. We are calling on them loudly and clearly to do their due diligence. We want it to come back here as soon as possible.

However, they are still independent. We need to let them do their work, but we are ready to receive it.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the greatest institution is our democracy.

Peter Boehm and Peter Harder, who I would remind members are two unelected officials, have even refused to meet with the Minister of International Trade in committee. They made sure that they met with every group imaginable that is against supply management, but they did not want to hear from the minister.

That is proof that the Prime Minister needs to personally intervene. He is the one who appointed those senators who now want to turn the Senate into the House of Lords, superior to the House of the people. We cannot let that happen.

When will the Prime Minister finally ask these two monarchs to stop hurting farmers?

The Speaker: Before we move on to the answer, I would like to remind all members that it is part of our usual practices and our Standing Orders to be respectful of the other chamber and the people who serve there. I would ask members to exercise some restraint.

The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right.

He mentioned hurting farmers. That is exactly what the Bloc Québécois is doing by aligning itself with the Conservatives. If any party in the House is against supply management, it is the Conservative Party.

The Bloc Québécois will now have to explain to people, including farmers, why it is entering into an alliance with the Conservatives and saying that the only thing it will do from now on is to ensure that there is an election to presumably bring to power a Conservative Party that would make cuts in every area, including assistance for farmers.

Oral Questions

● (1505)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the food bank back home, Moisson Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, reports that there is twice as much demand as there was three years ago. In total, there are 76 requests for help every month. More and more locals are fighting to keep their head above water. What is the Bloc Québécois doing? It is doing absolutely nothing. It has not made any gains for Quebec.

Why do the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the Prime Minister prefer to feed the bureaucracy in Ottawa instead of allowing Quebecers to feed their families?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader and the Conservatives have always shown their true colours. They confirmed that their main plan was to make cuts. With the Conservatives, it is chop, chop, chop. They are going to make cuts in dental care, in help for families, in the Canada child benefit, in small craft harbours, in pharmacare. They get it.

We are scared of the Conservatives. Children are scared of the Conservatives. It is Halloween. We want nothing to do with them.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Halloween. After nine years of the Liberals, food banks are swamped. In just three years, demand has shot up by 107% in my region. That is 76 requests a month.

People who used to donate food are now lining up to receive some, all because of this government's obsession with taxing everything from gas to food and beyond. The Bloc Québécois is going along with it. By voting twice to confirm its confidence in this government, the Bloc Québécois betrayed Quebecers. The time has come for an election.

When will the Prime Minister call an election?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you were right earlier on. We cannot compare people to fictional characters because the reality we see in front of us is worse.

When will my colleagues opposite tell us about the other cuts they intend to make and the most vulnerable people they intend to attack, people who, speaking of housing, are homeless? We look forward to hearing what the Conservatives are going to do. We also encourage them to get their house in order and get their security clearance.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Halloween, and the Liberal bogeyman has been scaring Canadians for nine years. It is making our families, seniors and children poorer. With the complicity of the Bloc Québécois, it is forcing our families to beg for food. An article in today's *La Presse* entitled "La crise silencieuse" or "the silent crisis" talks about the numbers at Moisson Montréal. This Montreal food bank has seen a sharp increase in demand, with requests for food reaching one million per month. Unfortunately, 14% of these requests are coming from students.

Why are the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the Prime Minister more interested in feeding the bureaucracy in Ottawa than in helping Quebecers feed their families?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is astounding to hear Conservative members talk about the importance of taking care of children when the Leader of the Opposition says that supporting the Breakfast Club, La Cantine pour tous and elementary school teachers in my colleague's riding is nothing but bureaucracy.

How can my Conservative colleagues from Quebec sit there while their Conservative leader insults the Breakfast Club partners, for example, and calls them bureaucratic?

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader came to Quebec City and solemnly promised to fund a hypothetical third link, even though no one knows how much it will cost or if it is even feasible. However, he has no qualms about promising to take dental care away from the nearly 10,000 young and not-so-young people in Sainte-Foy, in my riding, who have benefited from it over the past year. We now know that more than one million Canadians are benefiting from the Canadian dental care plan that we introduced and that the Conservatives are threatening to cut.

Could the Minister of Public Services and Procurement explain how this program is benefiting Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

● (1510)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is Halloween, and the Conservative leader is an amazing magician. He told Radio-Canada that the Canadian dental care plan does not exist. He made 800,000 seniors' Canadian dental care plan cards disappear in Quebec alone. He says it does not exist, so he cannot say why he is against the Canadian dental care plan when 20,000 seniors in the riding of our Conservative colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis have a Canadian dental care plan card in their pockets.

How is the Conservative leader going to make those 20,000 cards disappear on Halloween night?

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nine months ago, Belleville, Ontario, was rocked by an opioid crisis, with 36 overdoses in only 48 hours. The Prime Minister said he would be there for Belleville, Ontario, but after nine months, there has not one more dollar for infrastructure. There are no more treatment beds, and just last week in Belleville, there were 11 overdoses in only two hours. How many more months does Belleville, Ontario, have to wait for any support for mental health from the Prime Minister?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Orléans to not take the floor unless recognized.

The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, I visited Belleville and met with the mayor and all stakeholders involved because every loss of life in Belleville, or in any community across this country, is tragic. That is exactly why we launched the emergency treatment fund, which is already open and accepting applications from municipalities and indigenous communities across the country.

We are there for communities each and every day. Harm reduction and treatment, all of these tools, are health care. We will stand by communities and save lives.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Belleville is waiting for any dollars from the federal government, the city has been paying dollars to the federal government. The City of Belleville council this week released a report. It showed that, over the last five years, the city has paid \$1.5 million to the carbon tax, and it is getting no refund. This money could have gone to supporting mental health. It could have paid for the renovations of its hub for mental health. Not only that, but when the Prime Minister quadruples that tax, Belleville is going to pay \$5 million in five years.

Why would the Prime Minister not give that money back to Belleville, or better yet, call a carbon tax election so Belleville and its residents could decide how to spend their money on mental health?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: Actions speak louder than words. When the Conservatives were in power, they cut the drug treatment fund by two-thirds.

Let me ask this of the member: Why does he allow the leader of the Conservatives to use those who struggle with addiction and substance use as props in fundraising rather than standing by those who need help? Why do Conservatives advocate to close safe consumption sites, which have saved 58,000 lives?

The Conservatives do not care. They will not invest in what is needed. On this side of the House, we are fighting to save lives. Shame on them for criminalizing people who need health care.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, crime is up and churches are being targeted. A Winnipeg neighbourhood saw a 61% increase in crime. Churches are having to pay thousands of dollars for repairs and security. One church had to put up an eight-foot barbed wire fence to keep criminals out. A woman was victim to an armed carjacking while leaving church, and two people died last month after a church was set on fire. In fact, 30 churches have been burned to the ground over the past few years, and countless more have been vandalized in Canada.

When will the Liberals stop blocking the Conservative bill, Bill C-411, which would specifically hold arsonists accountable for church burnings?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that in this country everyone deserves to be safe where they go to school and where they pray. Safety in our communities is of utmost importance. This is why we have provided more funding to help religious institutions and places of worship right across this country put in place additional measures to help keep them safe. We are deeply committed to this. This is not something the Conservatives own because we are investing in our communities to keep all places of worship safe.

• (1515)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from different ethnic backgrounds are now scared that they could be the target of violent crimes by foreign nations. The RCMP believes agents from India have been targeting the Sikh community with bullying, blackmail and even plots to kill some of them. Foreign interference is a serious issue, and all of us need to work together to protect Canadians.

Could the Minister of Emergency Preparedness guide the House on the best way to protect Canadians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegations made by the RCMP over the intimidation, extortion and murder by a foreign government on Canadian soil should be taken seriously by all parties. We owe it to the Sikh community and to all Canadians to put partisanship aside and work on solutions to assure the integrity and sovereignty of our country. That is why it is deeply disturbing that the Conservative leader still refuses to get a security clearance. Why is he willing to put our democracy and the security of Canadians at risk?

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, London families with loved ones trapped in Sudan have been failed by the government. It has been eight months since the Liberals announced a program to bring families in Sudan to safety, but only five applications have been approved. As the humanitarian crisis in Sudan gets worse, more and more people will die. Londoners were promised by the government that their family would have a path to safety.

Routine Proceedings

Will the minister fix his failed program so families can save their relatives before it is too late?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows well that we worked with families to devise this program. She also knows well, or should know, that since the war broke out, we have facilitated the departure of 9,000 people from Sudan. In this particular program, we will continue to reunite families and work to make sure that they come to Canada in safety.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we have an unspeakable tragedy of a Canadian mother of six, known only as F.J., whose six children were repatriated to Canada, but the government refused to allow their mother to travel with them. She is now dead in a Turkish prison.

I ask the hon. government members here, the Minister of Public Safety and the minister for international affairs, if will they follow the requirements of justice to have an immediate, independent investigation into F.J.'s death and immediately repatriate all remaining Canadian detainees in northeast Syria.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her compassion and for her concern for people around the world. It is well noted and respected.

My thoughts are indeed with children who have already endured so much in this particular situation. We are well aware of the reports, and we are treating the situation with the utmost seriousness and with the sense of urgency it absolutely deserves.

Unfortunately I am not able to comment further due to privacy concerns, but we will continue to keep the House updated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:19 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the second report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

Call in the members.

• (1545)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 874)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Dance	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garon
Garrison	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)

Business of the House

McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
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Sajjan
Samson
Sauvé
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Martel
McCaughey (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shiple
Soroka
Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
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PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North) Gaudreau — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, it is time for the Thursday question. I note that the calendar is just about to change over to November. That means the government has kept Parliament paralyzed through the latter half of September and all of October, and now tomorrow will be the third month it would rather tie up the business of the House with a privilege motion on the refusal to hand over evidence to the RCMP in its \$400-million corruption scandal.

The government has had a lot of time to go through hard drives and file folders, to go through all the documents that are surrounding the sordid affair where Liberal-friendly board members funnelled taxpayers' dollars into their own companies. I hear from constituents every day who want to know who got rich, who knew it was happening and what the government is doing to get their money back. It all starts with the RCMP's being able to do its job.

I would like to ask someone from the government side what the business of the House might be, should the government finally comply with the lawful production order and let Parliament get back to work.

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
d'Entremont
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrerri
Gallant
Genuis
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar

Privilege

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the past few weeks, the Conservatives have been preventing members of Parliament from doing their job. As former senior legal counsel in the Office of the House of Commons Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel Steven Chaplin wrote in *The Hill Times* this week:

It is time for the House of Commons to admit it was wrong, and to move on. There has now been three weeks of debate on a questionable matter of privilege based on the misuse of the House's power to order producing documents.

He goes on to say:

In short, there must be an underlying parliamentary purpose or function to support what amounts to a summons for the production of documents. In this case, an order for departments and agencies to provide documents to the RCMP through the law clerk is completely untethered to any parliamentary business, and therefore lacks any constitutional—or legal—basis, including any basis in parliamentary law.

He ends with a stark warning, indicating:

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

The House has been held hostage by the official opposition. There is only one party that is obstructing the work of Parliament; that is the reality. As I have shared many times in the chamber, the government supports the motion the Conservatives themselves moved, in which—

• (1550)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Perth—Wellington is rising on a point of order.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, the point of the Thursday question is very clear; it is to respond to the business of the House, as indicated in chapter 10 of Bosc and Gagnon. What is more, the member is reading verbatim an outside source into the record. As we know, we are not supposed to read verbatim into the record of the House. The member should tell us what the business of the House is for the coming week and dispense with the nonsense.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that, first of all, the hon. opposition House leader did go into details as well. I felt that was a point of debate, so I just wanted to double-check that with the table, as this other member was also doing.

I would ask members to please stick to the question of the day and to please stick to the answer for the question of the day.

As such, the hon. parliamentary secretary can wrap up, please.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I have shared many times in this chamber, the government supports the motion that the Conservatives moved, and that they continue to filibuster, to refer the matter to committee.

Let us be clear that the Conservatives have decided that they want to grind the House to a halt rather than work for Canadians, which is preventing the House from debating and voting on important business that we would like to get back to, including Bill C-71 relating to citizenship, Bill C-66 on military justice, Bill C-63 concerning online harms, the ways and means motion related to capital gains, and the ways and means motion tabled this week, which contains our plan to require more transparency from charities that use

deceptive tactics to push women away from making their own reproductive decisions.

In conclusion, while the Conservatives shake their fists saying that they are holding the government to account, what they are showing Canadians is just how reckless they can be in their relentless pursuit of power.

We, on this side, will continue to work for Canadians.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour and privilege to rise in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the great people of south-west Saskatchewan. I have done so many times before, and there seems to be a recurring theme that when I rise in this place, it is to talk about Liberal scandals. It has happened over and over again. If Liberals want to keep abusing the taxpayer, Conservatives are going to keep pointing it out. We will do it as long as it takes and as many times as we have to until they agree to comply with the will of the House of Commons.

What are we here for today? It is about Sustainable Development Technology Canada and the Liberals' failure to produce documents demanded by this House. More than \$400 million were funnelled to Liberal-owned and Liberal insider corporations. When Liberals say they are here to deliver for Canadians, what they really mean is they are here to deliver for their friends to make sure they get the first crack at the taxpayer's dollar.

There are public scandals like the Prime Minister's blackface, when he told reporters, "I should have known better, but I didn't." There are corruption scandals like the SNC-Lavalin affair, where the Prime Minister became the only prime minister to violate the Conflict of Interest Act, which he has done multiple times. The list goes on. In fact, the list is so long that it makes up more than one-third of all corruption scandals at the federal level in our nation's history. One-third of corruption scandals have been committed by the current government in the last nine years.

Privilege

I wish I could say that the corruption stops there, but it does not. On April 9, 2020, the government received an unsolicited proposal for a youth program from WE Charity. Just a couple of weeks later, the Prime Minister announced a student grant program for this very proposal. In June, when the program officially launched, the Prime Minister said it was not a conflict of interest, despite the charity paying his family members to speak at events, totalling \$425,000 in expenses and money paid out. WE Charity co-founder Craig Kielburger also happened to have donated nearly \$2,500 to the Prime Minister's leadership campaign back in 2013, and yet we are supposed to take the word of the Prime Minister when he claims his decision on involvement with them was not a conflict of interest. That is not going to happen.

The then finance minister, Bill Morneau, also had two daughters with ties to or working for WE Charity at the time of the scandal. He took paid vacations and attended special dinners, and he did not think it would be wrong to do so. All the former finance minister had to say on the subject afterward was that, in retrospect, he should have recused himself from the discussion. It is not so easy to tell the public someone should have made a different decision after the person has already made it, especially when it is a bad decision. At what point do elected officials need to be expected to make good decisions and not just constantly apologize for making bad ones? As the Prime Minister routinely says, we can all learn from this.

The WE Charity was put in charge of a \$900-million grant, with an estimated operating cost of \$19 million. However, as we learned, it could have been \$43 million as it was under-reported. WE has three branches, including one in the U.K. and one in the U.S. and between those branches, more money has been sent to the organization in Canada than abroad, where it claims to be doing charitable work. Where it claims to do the most charitable work, in Kenya, it is not even listed in the top 50 NGOs. Instead, it is known for North American and European celebrity visits and photo-ops, as a reporter from the national newspaper puts it.

WE Charity also claimed it sent medical supplies as another way it spent on charitable efforts, but its U.S. tax filings in 2019 have no such purchases, and it refuses to make its Canadian statements public. The Prime Minister then prorogued Parliament to halt further investigations into the WE scandal. I wish I could say this was a poor decision on who the Liberals wanted to do business with, but they have shown time and time again that they deliberately do business with either corrupt or conflicted organizations, and it is not until they are publicly exposed that they claim to have regrets about their actions. Like the Prime Minister said, we can all learn from this.

As parents, we try to teach our kids to be sincerely sorry for their actions and not just simply for getting caught. What parents want to see are corrective actions, steps and measures they have taken to make sure that this does not happen again, and yet here we are in a gridlock once again over more Liberal corruption.

• (1555)

It seems to be something that the Prime Minister never learned, possibly was never taught. Either way, he is the one who is in charge of leading this country. We know that a fish rots from the head down and it seems to be true in the case of the government.

Before the WE Charity it was SNC-Lavalin. After the WE Charity it was the Manitoba lab. Then it was the arrive scam. Then it was appointing a sister-in-law as the Ethics Commissioner. Today, it is the green slush fund. What kind of a government thinks it is okay to appoint a sitting cabinet minister's sister-in-law to be ethics commissioner amidst potential investigations into conflict of interest allegations? It is a government that is trying to hide its corruption. That is just unacceptable, no matter what the member for Winnipeg North says.

There have been so many scandals, yet the NDP-Liberals have found ways to avoid accountability for their corruption, the latest being the withholding of documents that belong to the public to hide the names and information of people involved in this corruption. Let us take a look back at how they have avoided accountability before this.

With respect to SNC-Lavalin, the Prime Minister pressured the justice minister to interfere with the lawsuit to get away without prosecution.

With respect to the WE Charity, the government prorogued Parliament to avoid further investigations into the scandal.

When Canadians demanded accountability with respect to the convoy, the Prime Minister responded by enacting the Emergencies Act to avoid being held to account for trampling on the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

The Prime Minister seems to believe that this House belongs to him instead of the people and that is a very serious problem.

In fact, when it came to the Winnipeg lab, he even took the Speaker of the House of Commons to court. The only thing that stopped that from happening was an election conveniently called by the Prime Minister.

Canadians should not have to worry about the institutions of their nation stealing from them. The government has robbed the taxpayers and has made no effort to make things right or to take accountability. The Prime Minister has still not demanded that the taxpayers receive their money back from the arrive scam scandal. Why is it that it is always the taxpayers who get stuck paying for the government's unethical behaviour?

Privilege

Today, we are in the House debating a privilege motion on the corrupt Liberal green slush fund, the SDTC, and how it laundered more than \$400 million of taxpayer money to the Liberals' friends and, in some cases, their own businesses. They refuse to hand over unredacted documents as per the will of the House of Commons and the Speaker's order. These documents, along with everything in this House, belong to the people. They are not the Liberal government's property and it has no right to keep them from the taxpayer, especially seeing how these hundreds of millions of dollars that were spent belong to the taxpayer. The government has no money. It only has taxpayers dollars that it has taken from the taxpayer.

The SDTC has become a playground for conflicts of interest. In 2022, the SDTC appointed Michael Denham, a previous appointee to the BDC by the Minister of International Trade. Mr. Denham has been a generous donor to the Liberal Party, donating thousands of dollars, including to a violator of the Conflict of Interest Act, former finance minister Bill Morneau, who is now "Bill no more". It is no wonder the Liberal government has been responsible for more than a third of all scandals at the federal level in all of our country's history.

A board member at the SDTC, Stephen Kukucha, not only helped funnel taxpayer dollars into Liberal insider corporations, but has made hundreds of donations totalling in the tens of thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party, including donating to the Prime Minister's leadership campaign in 2013.

There is Annette Verschuren, the director of the board, who was, as members can guess, also a Liberal donor.

Then there is the example of Mr. Kielburger, who invested in the Prime Minister's success to be the head of the Liberal Party and has benefited greatly from receiving either money or positions years later from the government. Somehow it does not occur to the Liberals that this could be wrong, going even so far as to tell the public in the WE scandal that it was not a conflict of interest. I wonder how many others have gotten a return on their investment from the government that we do not even know about yet. Sunlight is always the best disinfectant.

● (1600)

It must be nice to have friends like the Liberals do. It is "I'll scratch your back and you scratch mine". It should be hard to believe that in just nine years, to say it again, the Liberals have committed more than one-third of all the public corruption scandals in the entire history of the federal government. It should be hard to believe that they think the House belongs to them and are above accountability for their actions. It should be hard to believe that they have stolen hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money and have given it to their friends and their own companies. However, it is not, when we look at how the people who are appointed to arm's-length institutions are often donors, in-laws or close friends. Just as bad as conflicts of interest is using the executive powers of the House to appoint insider donors and friends to oversee the accountability that is supposed to prevent this kind of theft from happening in the first place.

Time and time again, those in the Liberal government have proven that they have absolutely no regard for the sanctity of this chamber or for the offices they hold. The Liberal government has

managed to tally up, all in all, one-third of all Canadian ethics violations, while having been in government for less than a decade. Liberal grifting knows no bounds. There has been an ethics scandal every single year the Liberal government has been in office.

One of my first speeches in the House of Commons after I was elected as a member of Parliament was about the Joe Peschisolido report, which was a report from the Ethics Commissioner about former Liberal MP Joe Peschisolido, who the Ethics Commissioner concluded was involved in serial ethics breaches, meaning more than one. In other words, it was happening on a regular basis, permeating from the top down, clearly from the Prime Minister to the rest of his cabinet. I talked then about how as a new MP it was unfortunate that what I was speaking about early in my term was the culture of corruption the Prime Minister was continuing to demonstrate over and over again to his caucus and the bureaucracy, then allowing it to happen within the Liberals' own ranks.

From coast to coast, and especially across the southwest, Canadians are struggling more than ever. Just this morning at committee, I heard from witnesses explaining the debt that Canadians are digging themselves into just to afford essentials like food, clothing and shelter. All the while, Liberal insiders are being funnelled taxpayer money to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Despite scandal after scandal and report after report, the Liberals still have absolutely no remorse for what they have done. The house of cards that sits across this chamber keeps trucking along. It is just insane. The Liberals do the same thing over and over again, yet we expect something to change and it never does. Maybe this time they will obey the rules, listen to the will of Parliament and release the documents, but so far, no. Canadians know this, though. Canadians can see the rotten-to-the-core Liberal government and they are ready for change.

It is worth pointing out the complacency of the Liberals' coalition partner the New Democrats, who are so terrified of facing Canadians and losing their pensions that they have refused to help bring the government down. In fact, it is 116 days until the leader of the NDP's pension will be vested. He has been making news lately by telling Canadians that he is absolutely not interested in bringing down the Liberal government. In 116 days from now, on February 25, is he magically going to grow a spine, be willing to take real action on behalf of Canadians and bring the tired, corrupt government down, or is he going to keep propping it up? Are the New Democrats going to pass the election reform bill, which will lock in a change to the election date so the NDP leader can make sure that his caucus members and members on the Liberal side are guaranteed to lock in their pensions, or will they do the right thing and call a carbon tax election at the soonest available opportunity? Is he going to put his pension above Canadians? I guess time will tell.

The Liberals hate the thought of accountability, whether it comes from this chamber or from their own caucus. The former attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould and the former president of the Treasury Board Jane Philpott were kicked out of caucus for doing the right thing when it came to SNC-Lavalin. As I said, one-third of all federal scandals in Canadian history belong to the Prime Minister and his cronies. The Prime Minister has had as many scandals in his nine years as Canada's first 20 prime ministers did over a span of 137 years. No matter what way we look at it, it is impressive that he was able to do that. That is not to mention that he has added more money to the national debt than every other prime minister combined. I guess when one is involved in that many scandals, of course it is going to cost the taxpayers money.

● (1605)

I would like to remind the House what happened in April: For the first time in over a century, the House called someone to the bar for questioning. That man, Kristian Firth, exercised absolutely no remorse over lining his pockets with taxpayer money.

Even when the most exclusive powers of the House are used, the Liberals do not care. Their friends do not care. They fundamentally believe that they are above accountability and certainly think they are above the will of the House. It is disgraceful. The man summoned to the House back in 1913 was imprisoned because he failed to answer the questions of the House, yet today, the Liberals and the people they empower do it shamelessly and just walk out.

At the core of this debate is the Speaker's ruling on September 26 declaring that this place's privileges had been violated. For nearly 350 years, the supremacy of Parliament was something cherished in Westminster systems like ours across the world. Here in Canada, our government, the executive branch, does not operate outside the confines of this place. It is formed by it. The Prime Minister and his cabinet sit just across the way, where every day they face the scrutiny of the opposition in question period. The centralization of power that the Prime Minister is overseeing should worry everyone in the chamber and everybody across this country, because it flies right in the face of how our system of government works. Parliament is supreme and the Liberals must respect it.

Privilege

The government is a public entity and everything in the House belongs to the public. When will the Liberals stop hiding their corruption and stop withholding documents that do not even belong to them so the House can get back to work and Canadians can get the answers they are owed?

Another public entity out there, which hits a bit more closely to home, is Parks Canada. It operates Grasslands National Park. If we want to talk about the way the Liberals are abusing the authority they have, we can look at the species at risk. They are trying to tell Canadians and the ranchers down in the Val Marie area that the prairie dog is a species at risk that must be protected. However, a quick Google search shows that the prairie dog is not even a native species to Canada and it is not just surviving but thriving. We see it from the southern tip of Saskatchewan all the way down to Mexico and all the through the central states, yet the bureaucracy the government is overseeing is saying it is a species at risk.

What are they doing with the sage grouse? They are saying that these two species coexist. There is a way to prove they do not coexist and that the prairie dog does not belong in Grasslands National Park in the way the government says it does: The prairie dog likes to eat the root of the sagebrush. Sage grouse, which are called sage grouse for a reason, like sagebrush for its shelter and protection. When the prairie dog eats the sagebrush root, it turns into a tumbleweed and blows away, leaving the sage grouse exposed, at risk and in danger. When Parks Canada is trying to protect another species at risk, namely the sage grouse, it is creating all kinds of issues because of the way it is managing.

Let us talk about the new bridge being built at one of the historical ranches. Parks Canada is building it in a location that was not even recommended by the local RM but decided to plow through with it anyway. There is another species at risk out there called the nighthawk. All of their nests and where they like to be are right in the path of this bridge, and Parks Canada is building right through it. It said forget it; it is building this bridge there anyway.

Parks Canada is deliberately ignoring another species at risk, and it is doing it for triple the cost of what the municipality is able to build similar bridges for. If it would have accepted the proposal of the municipality, it would have had the bridge already done and done for a third of the cost, but, no, we have to get more bureaucracy involved and make it way more expensive.

Privilege

Rather than just take up the local perspective, the views of the locals, the people at Parks Canada would rather take a view that, again, creates excessive and unnecessary spending. They would rather kick the ranchers out of the park. They say that bureaucrats can manage ranch land better than producers who have been doing it for way longer than the bureaucracy has even been around. It is shameful. If they want to prove to Canadians that they actually care, they would listen to locals. They would listen to the producers down in Grasslands National Park. They would listen to the RM of Val Marie and do what is right.

• (1610)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, who is next? That is the fundamental question. Today, the Conservatives seek to direct an RCMP investigation. Who is to say that tomorrow they will not direct an RCMP investigation into the affairs of unions and labour organizations? This is a dangerous precedent the Conservatives want to set.

Ten years ago, they passed legislation, Bill C-377, under the guise of transparency and accountability, aimed at destroying and weakening unions and preventing them the ability to represent workers. They are trying to do the same thing here. This is the danger of the precedent they are trying to set today. Who is next?

• (1615)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, maybe the member should be asking whose pockets the Liberals are going to line next. Conflict keeps happening over and over with the government.

Let us talk about unions and take a look at what they are saying. They are looking at what the government is doing with some of its legislation, legislation that is going to strip away the hard-fought and hard-earned rights of unions, such as health care and prescription plans. The Liberals have teamed up with the NDP for legislation that is going to strip those away from unions, and unions have said “not a chance”.

The leader of the Conservative Party has stood up in this place and said that he will not let them strip those away from unions, and he is going to make sure that we prioritize workers and Canadian jobs and make sure that we do what is best for our country and economy. That involves unionized labour.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is fascinating to hear the hon. member talk about fighting for unions, which we know they do not do on that side.

Another thing the hon. member talked about was my party leader's pension. I will mention that the leader of the official opposition's pension is now worth \$3.4 million, which is 3.5 times larger than my leader's. I would love for the member to talk about the value of that pension. The fact is, the New Democrats fight for other people to ensure they have a pension in this country, while the Conservatives fail to do so and want to bring everybody down to the bottom denominator.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, Conservative values are about empowering people. I know the member will have heard us talk about powerful paycheques. The whole point of having a powerful paycheque is not only to enable a person to have a pension

with their employer, but also to allow them to make other investments if they want, because they have more of their own money in their own pockets, rather than paying it to the government or somebody else.

The leader of the NDP's pension is going to vest in 116 days, on February 25, and we are still waiting. He made a big, grand display where he ripped up the supply and confidence agreement between him and the Liberals, saying that he is done; that is it. However, what has the NDP leader done since then? He has not triggered an election and has kept supporting the Liberals. That is what he has done.

Which version is the truth? Who can trust the leader of the NDP? Nobody can, because he has proved it time and time again. He keeps changing his positions. If he is truthful about standing up for Canadians, he is not going to worry about February 25 and will defeat the government at the very first opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, it has been Groundhog Day for three weeks. We are starting the same debate over again. In fact, we are scraping the barrel for relevant questions. I am going to ask my colleague a question that does not really have anything to do with the debate. I asked one of his colleagues the same question a week or two ago.

Does my colleague believe, in his heart of hearts, that independence is a legitimate option for Quebecers?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I have been here for five years, and I never hear Bloc members talk about separating or about their independence. I do not think they are truly interested in that. I think they want to keep the arrangement going as it is. They keep stringing along voters by saying they care about their independence, yet they have voted with the government over and over again. They have supported the centralization of power here in Ottawa rather than respecting the jurisdiction and authority of the province of Quebec.

The Conservatives believe in empowering provinces, in strong provinces. With the way federalism works in this country, we have jurisdictional authorities, the provinces. We respect that, but the Liberals dabble in it all the time, especially when they think it benefits them. Then when it blows up in their faces, they blame the provinces. If I were the Premier of Quebec, I would be sick and tired of that happening. In fact, the Premier of Quebec has already said that he wants the Bloc Québécois to support bringing down the tired, corrupt government. I see the Bloc leader has finally gotten on board with that idea. It is just unfortunate that it took so long.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from southwest Saskatchewan, being from southwest Manitoba myself.

Privilege

The member outlined a number of the people involved in this scandal in his excellent speech. There is a size involved in this particular scandal, as the biggest in Canadian history. I wonder if he could elaborate on the people who were rejected from Parliament, I guess you could say, for a glass of orange juice versus the \$400 million here and the 58 million dollars' worth of untendered projects that did not even qualify for the money in the first place. I mean, it is amazing they did not even qualify and they still got that money.

● (1620)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. We can look at the different standards that exist, such as what happened long before I was in this place when a colleague was held accountable over a \$16 glass of orange juice. The Chrétien-Martin government was held accountable by Canadians for the sponsorship scandal, which was way less than this scandal. We are at over \$400 million. The Auditor General said, based on the findings and the fact there are things like deleted emails, that it is hard to know just exactly how big this is. It could be even bigger, which is absolutely ridiculous.

The lack of accountability and transparency that continues to be demonstrated by the government is absolutely appalling. That is why Canadians are sick and tired of the Liberal government. That is why Canadians are saying over and over again that they want an election, because they want a say and a choice in what kind of government is going to run this country. They are overwhelmingly looking forward to a Conservative government that would restore transparency and respect the taxpayer dollar.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had a chance to work with the member on the industry committee, and we had a good opportunity to work together there. I actually sit on the procedure and House affairs committee, which is the committee that would be tasked to look into this.

We have a lot of legislation before us, including Bill C-66, the military justice bill, which I think is incredibly important for getting justice for victims of assault in the military.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague if the Conservatives would be willing to allow this motion to go to PROC, so the committee could get to the bottom of what happened and make recommendations to the House.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, it was great to be able to serve on the industry committee with the member. We are both New England Patriots fans, so we had some chats about that as well.

I think what is important here is that it is the will of Parliament to have these documents turned over to the RCMP, and then we will let the RCMP decide what to do with them. Once the papers are turned over, at that point I think it would be good for PROC to take a look at what next steps could happen. That is why we actually have a subamendment here today, to try to talk about getting more people on the list who would speak at PROC on how we could make better changes.

However, what is important, first and foremost, is that it is the will of Parliament, this institution we are standing in here, which means it is the will of Canadians, to have the government turn over those documents to the RCMP, and then let the RCMP decide what to do with them. We know the RCMP is already investigating. These papers, as I said in my speech, belong to the public. Everything within this institution belongs to the public. The government should turn these public documents over to the RCMP and let it decide.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am indeed grateful for the opportunity to rise and participate in this debate today on the subamendment. I had the privilege to speak to the amendment and so it is a great opportunity to pick up where I left off and to speak to this important subamendment to this privilege motion.

The fact is, though, we are still where we were. The Liberal government continues to refuse to release the documents it has been ordered to produce by this very House. The Liberals do not wish to turn over the documents that will help to uncover clear corruption that has occurred at the green slush fund. Sadly, corruption has benefited Liberal insiders during the entirety of these nine years of the Liberal government. It is of vital importance that no matter how hard Liberals try to push it away from Parliament, we must continue to pursue this issue. No matter how many times the member for Winnipeg North comes up with an attempt to shrug this off, we will continue to pursue this on behalf of all Canadians.

After all of these days of debate, the facts remain clear. First, taxpayer money was taken by conflicted board members of SDTC to benefit their own financial and business interests. Second, and equally important for the integrity of this place, the House has still not been provided with the documents necessary and there has been no indication of when, or even if, the money of these conflicted payments will ever be paid back.

In the time between when I spoke to the amendment and now as I speak to the subamendment, more and somewhat interesting information has come to light. In my previous intervention, on October 8, I discussed the importance of Parliament being the grand inquest of the nation and the necessity of the power of the House to send for persons, papers and records. Unfortunately, those in the Liberal cabinet and those in the bureaucracy seem to fail to understand this essential, constitutionally protected power of Parliament.

This indifference was clearly on display last week at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. On Wednesday, October 23, a high-ranking official, a deputy secretary in fact, at the Privy Council Office, one of the highest bureaucratic offices in this country, appeared. I asked the deputy secretary a very clear question: "Do you accept that Parliament has the constitutional authority to call for documents without redactions?" I did not get an answer. Instead, I got invalid excuses that ignored the key constitutional facts.

Privilege

The right of Parliament to send for documents is not limited by any policy or statute. As explained in Bosc and Gagnon:

No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records.

It is, quite frankly, unacceptable that the Privy Council Office and its senior officials have chosen to ignore that fact. It is a simple fact that Parliament and its committees are the grand inquest of the nation. Our constitutionally protected ability is to call for the documents that we deem necessary, as the House did in June of this year when we ordered that the documents be provided to the law clerk, unredacted, to be provided to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

• (1625)

The power of the House to send for persons, papers and records is an old power indeed. It is part of the very essence of our work within parliamentary democracy. Our Constitution, since the founding of our country in 1867, has affirmed such a right. In fact, the British North America Act, now called the Constitution Act, 1867, lays this privilege out in section 18:

The privileges, immunities, and powers to be held, enjoyed, and exercised by the Senate and by the House of Commons, and by the members thereof respectively, shall be such as are from time to time defined by Act of the Parliament of Canada, but so that any Act of the Parliament of Canada defining such privileges, immunities, and powers shall not confer any privileges, immunities, or powers exceeding those at the passing of such Act held, enjoyed, and exercised by the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and by the members thereof.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is somewhat ironic. The member stood up on a point of order earlier today suggesting I am not allowed to read, and it would appear that he might actually be reading.

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, it is not unusual for members to be reading something into the record verbatim. I know the hon. member raised that earlier, but there was an issue on both sides. It was because they were elaborating on more than what was supposed to be the Thursday question and the response.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington has the floor.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, to reaffirm, I am quoting a passage from the Constitution itself, something that defines the House and defines the very issue at play as well.

Not to send a spoiler alert across the way, but I will have some more interesting quotations coming up later in my remarks. I know the member for Winnipeg North will be very intrigued to hear some of those quotations on this important issue. After all, I believe that no member has contributed more to this very debate than the member for Winnipeg North. I believe he has had north of 300 interventions on this very debate. I do congratulate him on his verbose contributions to the extensive debate he is taking part in.

Let us get back to the important, constitutionally protected, issue at hand. Those privileges, immunities and powers that were held by the House in 1867 and by the United Kingdom, its predecessor, continue today and have some of their roots dating back centuries.

In fact, some of the greatest protections that we have as parliamentarians originate in 1215 with the Magna Carta.

I am going to give another quote for the member for Winnipeg North. From the United Kingdom Parliament:

Magna Carta was issued in June 1215 and was the first document to put into writing the principle that the king and his government was not above the law. It sought to prevent the king from exploiting his power, and placed limits of royal authority by establishing law as a power in itself.

How true that is, and 800 years later, the Magna Carta still stands as the principle that no person, king or ruler is above the law. I have but 20 minutes to express my points, and I could go on at great length about the Magna Carta alone, but let us jump ahead a few centuries to 1688. I know members will be intrigued with the discussion on the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

I would note that the long-term impacts of the 1688 Glorious Revolution, a revolution that did not have bloodshed, I might add, are so important to where we are today and the rights that we have as parliamentarians, not for our own purposes, but on behalf of the people that we have the honour of serving.

I want to quote the Hon. John Dalberg Acton, one of the great UK parliamentarians, from his writing *Lectures on Modern History*. He wrote this about the Glorious Revolution:

...it is the greatest thing done by the English nation. It established the State upon a contract, and set up the doctrine that a breach of contract forfeited the crown—the former, in the English Convention; the latter, in the Scottish. Parliament gave the crown, and gave it under conditions. Parliament became supreme in administration as well as in legislation. The king became its servant on good behaviour, liable to dismissal for himself or his ministers. All this was not restitution, but inversion. Passive obedience had been the law of England. Conditional obedience and the right of resistance became the law. Authority was limited and regulated and controlled. The Whig theory of government was substituted for the Tory theory on the fundamental points of political science. The great achievement is that this was done without bloodshed, without vengeance, without exclusion of entire parties, with so little definiteness in point of doctrine that it could be accepted, and the consequences could be left to work themselves out.

I point this out because our Constitution, our history of a parliamentary government in Canada, has a proud, long and respected history. This country and this system of government was built on those powers, where power was removed from the absolute Crown and given to the people's representatives, who are here to express the common sense of the common people.

• (1635)

I am sure the Speaker would agree that parliamentary democracy ought to be protected, and it ought to be done with the protection of each and every member of the House. Constitutional expert, the late Peter Hogg, expounded on this in one of his seminal works, *Constitutional Law of Canada*, 5th edition. I know the member for Winnipeg North is eager to hear this quotation from the great, late Peter Hogg. He wrote, on page 314 for those following along at home:

Privilege

The Crown is, of course, subject to its Parliament or Legislature. So long as a legislative body acts within the limits of its powers, it is free to make its laws applicable to the Crown (or government), just as it is free to make its laws applicable to other legal persons within its jurisdictions. Any other conclusion would be inconsistent with the supremacy of the legislative branch of government. Indeed, it was settled in England as early as 1561 that the Crown was bound by any statute which applied to it, and this is one of the fundamental principles of the British constitution that was received in British North America Act.

This reaffirms the very clear essence of this privilege debate. The House ordered the production of unredacted documents. It was not, “If you have time, would you be so kind as to provide these documents?” It was an order of the House and an order of the House’s parliamentarians. Indeed, it comes down to the very essence of responsible government. Members will notice that in the subamendment we are debating, we are requesting the presence of certain experts, one being a senior official at the Privy Council Office who had some interesting things to say on responsible government.

However, let us dig a little deeper into the importance of responsible government. By the time the fathers of Confederation were discussing plans to become a united Canada, it became clear that it was preferable to continue with the constitutional precedents inherited from the United Kingdom and not to adopt a system similar to what had been done in the United States.

On February 6, 1865, the then attorney general, who was soon to become the first prime minister, the Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, rose in the House of the Province of Canada to provide his thoughts on responsible government. He said, “In the Constitution we propose to continue the system of Responsible Government, which has existed in this province since 1841, and which has long obtained in the Mother Country. This is a feature of our Constitution as we have it now, and as we shall have it in the Federation”. That is from page 33 of the debates from the third session of the eighth provincial Parliament of the united Province of Canada

The first prime minister went on to explain that having cabinet held responsible to the legislative branch was an effort to avoid giving too much power to the executive branch, as had been seen elsewhere, including south of the border. Macdonald went on to say, “With us...the Representative of the Sovereign, can act only on the advice of his ministers, those ministers being responsible to the people through Parliament.” It is the essence of parliamentary democracy that Parliament is supreme and that cabinet is responsible to Parliament. It can neither ignore nor refuse an order of Parliament simply because a minister, or even a prime minister, may disagree with it.

Where does this bring us today?

In normal cases, ministerial responsibility means that the minister ought to take responsibility for the challenges within their department. When the House leader of the opposition made his initial question of privilege, he referenced a memorandum he had obtained from the Privy Council Office at the beginning of this Parliament. That memorandum was written by a certain Paul MacKinnon, and it states, “Public servants do not share in ministers’ constitutional accountability to the Houses of Parliament but support ministers in this accountability”. He also wrote, “the ultimate accountability for deciding what information to withhold from or release to parliamentarians resides with the responsible minister.” As such, where is the accountability from the accountable minister?

● (1640)

The Liberal government may believe that the rights and privileges of Parliament do not matter, but we will soon see if the responsibility of the minister responsible is there. It is time that the Prime Minister and his ministers hold themselves accountable to Parliament.

I want to recognize that the current minister was not the minister of the early days of SDTC. Who was the minister? That minister was Navdeep Bains, who has since left cabinet and politics. We have now twice attempted, at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, to hear evidence from the former Liberal minister Navdeep Bains. He may no longer be a Liberal minister, but he sure still talks like a Liberal minister with his empty statements that mean nothing and are intended to convey nothing. He refused to answer even basic questions at committee about dates and names, and he even refused to confirm where he was currently employed. This is further evidence that Liberals, even after their careers in politics are over, refuse to accept responsibility and accountability for their actions.

This brings us to the subamendment before the House today. I must admit that I was slightly disappointed with the original ruling in that I do not believe the best course of action is to refer this to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I know a member opposite is wondering why I would have concerns with the procedure and House affairs committee, but the member knows very well of past Liberal scandals where lengthy filibusters occurred at that committee. They were led by the member for Whitby, or the member for Hull—Aylmer, who tried to prevent us from getting to the bottom of important Liberal scandals, such as the WE Charity prorogation scandal or the foreign interference scandals that we have seen.

That is why I think the amendment and the subamendment are so important to strengthening the motion of the Speaker’s ruling. The subamendment would ensure that both Paul MacKinnon, the former deputy secretary to cabinet, and the Privacy Commissioner would appear as witnesses. Paul MacKinnon, as explained by the opposition House leader on September 26, is an official at the Privy Council Office who authored the memo that I cited earlier. It is important for him to explain before members of Parliament what he meant by, “the ultimate accountability for deciding what information to withhold from or release to parliamentarians resides with the responsible minister.” In my view, the ministers relevant to the June 10 motion have not been held accountable.

The other witness the subamendment proposes is the Privacy Commissioner. The commissioner is obviously an expert in the matter of protecting documents and could also provide valuable insights to the rules and procedures for providing papers and records based on a order of the House of Commons versus other means, such as an access to information request. I might add as well that the Privacy Commissioner is a former officer of Parliament as the former law clerk, so he also has the added benefit of knowing and understanding the rights and privileges of the House.

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This subamendment, if passed, would further strengthen the main amendment and ensure that we would get the answers necessary. This debate could be over today if the Liberal government were to simply hand over the documents as ordered by the House so that they could be provided to the RCMP to do what it will with them. This is to ensure that the accountability of the House is upheld.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was interesting listening to the member talk about Parliament in the fashion he articulated. One of the things that he forgot to talk about is that the only prime minister in the history of not only Canada, but also the entire Commonwealth, to be held in contempt of Parliament is Stephen Harper. The current leader of the Conservative Party was Harper's parliamentary secretary.

Let us fast-forward to today. Today we have the leader of the Conservative Party, who feels that he does not need to get a security clearance. After all, his chief of staff has that security clearance. However, he does not understand that, if he is saying to his chief of staff to tell him the names, it would be a criminal offence to do so. The leader of the Conservative Party does not understand that he is abusing the powers of the House. He is abusing the issue of foreign interference.

Why will the leader of the Conservative Party not do the honourable thing, put the nation's interest ahead of his personal interest and his party's interest, and get the security clearance? While he is at it, he can stop abusing—

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, as always, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his question. That was probably his 321st contribution to this debate, so I wish him well on his continued interventions.

Let us be very clear: The Prime Minister can and ought to release those names right now. We would call him into the House to release names from any party.

If the member wants to take a little walk down—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows full well he cannot reference the presence or absence of someone in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are debates going on now, so I will remind members that they are not to mention whether a member is present or not in the House.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I will rephrase that. We would call on the Prime Minister to rise in the House and make known the names of those individuals.

If the member for Winnipeg North wants to take a little walk down memory lane, let us talk about the corruption of the Liberal government. We have a Prime Minister who was twice convicted by the Ethics Commissioner of breaking ethics laws. The Prime

Minister's parliamentary secretary, the member for Hull—Aylmer, was convicted of breaking ethics laws.

The ethical challenges that are being faced by the Liberal government are the real issue at play here. It can try to distract the Canadian people from the real issues; however, at the end of the day, the Canadian people will decide who they wish to govern this country in a carbon tax election. I would say that I am ready any day to put the record of our Conservative Party up against any other party.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a two-part question for the member for Perth—Wellington.

In the Auditor General's report, she noted that one in six projects that were approved by the board for the slush fund monies were completely ineligible for any of the funding. Projects had nothing to do with green technology but only enriching Liberal cronies. For the first part, would he comment on that issue? I think it is incredibly important.

The second part is a bit more specific to the member for Perth—Wellington. Will he confirm to the House that, in fact, his Ph.D. dissertation was written on the Thursday question?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, on the first point, the fact that one out of six projects was indeed ineligible is a concern. In addition, of equal or perhaps even greater concern is the number of conflicted projects in the sample that the Auditor General looked at. This means that the board members themselves were voting specifically on matters they ought not to have been voting on. They were voting on enriching their own pockets by voting in favour.

To the second point, I need to correct the member. I have not finished my doctoral dissertation. It was an article I wrote on the Thursday question, not my dissertation, which is a long-languishing project. Perhaps we can get into what the actual topic of my dissertation is another time; it may be slightly out of the scope of this debate. However, I thank the member for his important question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I wonder if I would have unanimous consent to table a document entitled "Stephen Harper, Serial Abuser of Power: More Evidence"—

An hon. member: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I already have a no to the question. Therefore, we do not have unanimous consent.

I can come back to the hon. member if he has another question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

• (1650)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He was speaking about the production of documents and going back in history to about 25 years before Confederation with respect to the quotes he used from John A. Macdonald.

He was even able to show, from 1561, that this is how long ago the production of documents was required. I believe he referenced Bates, but he can recall the name of the individual; I probably have it wrong, and I am sure he would have it at his fingertips. Documents are required to be put forward by law.

This is even more pertinent today. Could my colleague expand on that?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, the member for Brandon—Souris is right. We are talking about a centuries-old tradition that gives Parliament the authority and, in fact, the constitutional authority to call for documents, and virtually the only limitation on this ability to call for documents is that the records have to exist and they have to exist within Canada. It does not matter whether they are written documents or digital documents; these matters are constitutionally obligated when ordered by this House of Commons on behalf of the people of this country to be produced. They must be produced provided they meet those very narrow exclusions about existing within Canada.

However, why is this important? It is important because it is our job as parliamentarians to represent the people in the country and the people are talking to us every day about demanding responses from the tired Liberal government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am a little disappointed the member did not want me to share with him all the scandals and corruption and abuse of power that his current leader and Stephen Harper were involved in. Having said that, I do have a quote for him. This comes from iPolitics in regard to the refusal of the leader of the Conservative Party to get the security clearance. It states that the leader of the Conservative Party's "approach to national security is 'complete nonsense,' says expert". I will follow it up with another quote: "Conservative leader...is 'playing with Canadians' by refusing to get a top-level security clearance and receive classified briefings on foreign interference, according to one national security expert."

This story has a lot of quotes and it does not reflect very positively on the leader of the Conservative Party. The suggestion is that he should put the nation's interests ahead of his personal interests and the interests of the Conservative Party. Would the member not agree? I am more than happy to share the story with the member if he would like the full story because it is a serious issue. The leader of the Conservative Party needs to get the security clearance.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his 324th intervention now on this issue.

Let us be very clear: The Prime Minister can release the names at any point he wishes to inside this House where he has the privilege to do so as a parliamentarian.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate another excellent speech from my colleague. Now, this is almost the third month that we have been talking about this scandal and it is clear to me that there must be criminality, as the whistle-blower alleged. What could the member say about it?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I am not sure about criminality, but there sure is corruption and there sure is disgraceful conduct that we have seen at the green slush fund, where we have conflicted board members voting to give themselves massive amounts of con-

Privilege

tracts. It is simply unacceptable and that is why these documents need to be provided to the law clerk so they can be forwarded to the RCMP for it to do what it wishes. The documents have to be provided unredacted.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member's speech. He has talked a lot about the Constitution, the various branches of the government and the division of power. However, I want his comment on the current situation, where the RCMP has written to the law clerk of the House of Commons, stating that it is very unlikely the officers will be able to use these documents in their investigation.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, very simply, the RCMP officers can do what they wish with the documents, but the order of this House is that they be provided.

* * *

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill: Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments.

[*English*]

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar, Emergency Preparedness; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Carbon Pricing.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise on a question of privilege that has taken our country by storm over the last number of months. No matter what the Liberals say, no matter what argument they throw at Canadians, it comes down to one very simple fact: The Conservative Party of Canada will not relent in our protection of the Constitution and the powers granted to the House by the people of Canada when it relates to reviewing documents and knowing what takes place in the Government of Canada.

Privilege

I was a member of the industry committee when the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets spoke for the first time about the \$400 million of waste in question today. Across Canada right now, Canadians are facing crises they have never seen before. The cost of living is up big time. In my riding, food bank usage has more than doubled. Canadians are struggling to pay their mortgage. In fact, since the Liberals and the NDP came to power, house prices and mortgages have doubled. The cost for a mortgage is over \$3,500 per month, and the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Canada's 10 biggest cities is over \$2,300 a month. Young Canadians are losing hope because the Canada they once knew is not the Canada before them today.

Indeed, I have said in the House before that if young Canadians, say in their early twenties, are in careers where they make more than the average of \$55,000 that a Canadian worker makes, saving up for a home in my community would take them nearly 20 years if they saved a large portion of their salary.

Canadians are struggling. British Columbians are paying a carbon tax of over \$80 per tonne. Just paying for the gas to get to work every day is costing Canadians hundreds of dollars a month, which goes directly into the coffers of the government.

On housing, Canadians have lost hope. They do not know where to go and are wondering what happened. If a young man or woman making a good salary in Canada was able to save \$500 or \$600 a month, it would still take them close to a decade to get into a condo in the market I live in today. Canadians are struggling and losing hope. Therefore, when Canadians hear in the House of Commons that the government simply refuses to do what Parliament is asking them to do, they are deeply concerned. They are concerned that the government is willing to stall the business of the House and possibly stall a carbon tax election, a housing tax election.

I will talk a bit about small businesses as well. Productivity for small businesses is in a crisis. In fact, from May to June, Canada lost 9,037 businesses; 6,331 declared insolvency year over year during that same period. The closures we are witnessing right now are even greater than those we saw during the pandemic, when the entire country was shut down. While Canadian entrepreneurs and workers are struggling, the government is still hiding behind a facade and behind lies about what the House of Commons can, in fact, ask.

In the spring, I addressed the damning report released by the Auditor General, which revealed that close to \$400 million had been misappropriated by the board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, otherwise known as SDTC. Two weeks ago, I spoke on the privilege motion and called on the government to provide the relevant documents. Once again, we find ourselves discussing a subamendment to bring the Privacy Commissioner and the former deputy secretary to the cabinet to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as well. Canadians want us to get on with that work. We are simply waiting for the papers.

• (1700)

As parliamentarians, we must stand up for Canadians and ensure that they have the information needed to make informed decisions. The Liberals' refusal to table the documents has effectively paralyzed our country, hindering our ability to do the work we were

elected to do. The obstruction makes it impossible for us to address many of the pressing issues that young Canadians are faced with every day: skyrocketing housing costs, rising food inflation and increasing crime.

This summer, I was out door knocking across British Columbia, and no matter what part of my province I was in, no matter what street I was on, I heard about middle-class families that just could not get ahead. At the end of the month, after either a massive mortgage payment or rent payment, a car payment and fees for school programs and athletics, they were left with nothing.

One family said to me, and it stuck out so clearly, that just a few years ago they were donating to the food bank and now they have to go there a couple of times a month to make up for the loss. They said that with the cost of gas, getting to work is more expensive, not to mention the fact that in their community today, the amount of crime they are facing as well is just through the roof. This family, like so many others, is wondering what happened to the Canada it knew and still loves.

The issue is about more than just \$400 million to Liberal insiders and friends; it is also about what this country stands for and what Canadians expect us to do in the House of Commons. Let me take this time, yet again, to remind the House of the government's corrupt mishandling of SDTC, otherwise known as the green slush fund. The program was designed to support innovation in sustainable development technologies. Established in 2001, it operated with few issues under both Liberal and Conservative governments until the Prime Minister took office.

The Auditor General's report outlined that there were a staggering 90 instances where conflict of interest policies were not followed. Nearly \$76 million was spent on projects connected to friends of the Liberals who sat on the board. The most egregious example comes from the Minister of Environment, a member of Parliament from the Montreal area. He worked for a company called Cycle Capital, which received hundreds of millions of dollars from the green slush fund. In fact, the Minister of Environment still has shares in this very company.

When we, on this side of the House, stand up for the rights of Parliament and for struggling Canadians, the Liberal Party is standing up only for its rich friends who have been enriched by taxpayer dollars at the expense of everyone else. Not only that, but \$59 million of projects were awarded that were not eligible for funding, and \$12 million was spent on projects that not only fell into conflict of interest but were also ineligible from the very beginning. The situation not only represents a betrayal of public trust but also illustrates a significant failure in oversight by the current minister.

We have to ask ourselves in the chamber how we can ensure accountability in government if those that are in power are not held to the same standards we expect of taxpayers. Conservatives have proven through the debate that the privileges of parliamentarians were violated by the government's refusal, which is why we are continuing to speak and why we will not relent about the serious action the government has taken.

This is not just a procedural misstep. It is not just political wrangling. It is a direct challenge to the very foundation of why all of us are in the House in the first place, and that is to approve or disapprove of how the government spends money. That authority rests with the 338 members of the chamber. As my colleague from southern Ontario so aptly mentioned in the debates related to Sir John A. Macdonald in the province of Canada, our system of government was designed to ensure that cabinet remained accountable to this very House.

However, the Liberals are shying away from their responsibilities to be accountable. They are taking every step possible and sharing every single false argument related to preventing them from doing what is right in the eyes of our Constitution and in the eyes of the taxpayers who pay for this place. It is not just us saying this; the Auditor General made it clear that the scandal falls squarely upon the government, that it did not sufficiently monitor the contracts and that it did not sufficiently follow due diligence procedures.

• (1705)

To understand the gravity of the situation, we must first reflect on the historical context of parliamentary privilege. Our rights and privileges as parliamentarians are not mere formalities; they are rooted in centuries of struggle against tyranny. As the British House of Commons gained eminence as a legislative assembly, it established privileges as statutes and part of common law aimed at protecting its members from interference, namely, the Crown.

Erskine May, a cornerstone reference in parliamentary procedure, defines privilege as “the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions”. In other words, I cannot do my job, nor can anyone in the House do their job, for that matter, if our privilege is disrupted.

In Canada, we inherited this legacy through the Constitution Act of 1867, which enshrines our rights and privileges, ensuring that they are not exceeded by any authority outside the House. The Parliament of Canada Act of 1985 further states that we retain these privileges, “not exceeding those...held, enjoyed and exercised by Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom”. In other words, we inherited the democratic traditions of the Westminster parliamentary system of responsible government. This is a powerful affirmation of our rights and responsibilities as members of this institution, drawing on hundreds of years of precedent that bring us here today.

I will get back to the motion. In June, the House leader of the official opposition tabled a motion asking for all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, emails and other correspondence exchanged among government officials regarding SDTC. The motion was sent through, and SDTC and associated parties either redacted

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the documents, withheld the documents or outright refused to present the documents to the official opposition. This is a clear violation of our collective parliamentary privilege. In making his argument, the opposition House leader referred to page 239 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, which reads:

Disobedience to rules or orders represents an affront to the dignity of the House, and accordingly the House could take action, not simply for satisfaction but to ensure that the House of Commons is held in the respect necessary for its authority to be vindicated. Without proper respect, the House of Commons could not function.

When the rules of parliamentary privilege and the House are disregarded, it undermines the authority and the powers the House can enact, and it diminishes its ability to govern properly. Let us not forget that it is not the government that decides which papers it must provide; it is the Parliament of Canada that decides which paper it needs. Without respecting the use of parliamentary privilege and obeying the orders of the House to produce and bring forward the requested documents, there is a complete disregard of respect for the House and its authority, as well as of our duty to Canadians to provide them with accurate and transparent information.

Why does this matter? It matters because we are in a housing crisis. We will not get out of the housing crisis without building more homes. Again, \$400 million matters because Canadians cannot afford a nice place to live. We will not get out of the housing crisis without building more homes. To build more homes, we need everyone pulling in the same direction: the federal government, the provincial government, municipalities, workers and, yes, the private sector.

Demonizing, taxing and blocking private sector involvement in Canada's housing market not only keeps us from solving the housing crisis but actually makes things worse. Smart federal housing policy incentivizes the private sector to build the housing people need across the housing spectrum, instead of demonizing it, which is what the government has been doing.

As for our new policy to remove the GST on new homes under \$1 million, we cannot get to this important work because the government and the House of Commons have been hamstrung with the government's refusal to put documents forward. We either have to go into a carbon tax election or a housing tax election, or get to the bottom of why the government is so corrupt that it refuses to give Parliament the documents it requested.

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Since the government came to power, the price of a home in Canada has doubled. Average monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled, to over \$3,500 per month. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Canada's 10 biggest cities is over \$2,300 a month, and nine out of 10 young people in this country who do not own a home believe they never will. It now takes over 60% of one's income to cover the cost of owning a home. According to the OECD, Canada has the largest gap between home prices and incomes of all developed countries. Canada has the fewest number of homes per capita in the G7, and CMHC is predicting that housing starts will continue to decline by up to 32%.

The government has spoken a lot about its housing accelerator fund, which has actually led to no homes despite billions of dollars more of taxpayer dollars wasted. In fact, my community of Abbotsford was one of the communities that received money under the plan. Do members know what the City of Abbotsford is doing right now? It is about to increase the DCC by 46% and levy a new \$7,800 tax on all new homes built to pay for our recreation infrastructure deficit. As a young parent, I understand the need for effective recreational opportunities for our youth, but they should not come on the backs of Canadians who want to purchase their very first home.

What we need to do is incentivize more home construction. How we are going to get there is by pushing municipalities to approve more homes quickly, incentivizing them with infrastructure dollars to densify and to build up around our transportation stations so Canadians can get to work faster, save more money and live in the community where they are in fact working. We can do this. We are a country of resilience.

Unfortunately, the government has directed \$90 billion directed toward housing, but all it can do is point to the statistics I raised earlier that show that housing is more expensive, rent is more expensive and young people do not have an opportunity to get into the market. Indeed, the Liberal record on housing is so bad that young people are giving up on owning a home. In some cases, they are thinking about moving south of the border because there are more opportunities there.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation says that Canada needs a total housing stock of over 22 million units by 2030. To reach 22 million units by 2030, CMHC says we must build 3.5 million more units than we are building right now. CMHC says that those 3.5 million units required by 2030 will require an investment of at least \$1 trillion to build. CMHC says we need increased participation from the private sector to meet those goals. That is exactly what the Conservative Party is saying as well: Let us incentivize the private sector to play a larger role in home construction.

• (1710)

It is not just the Conservative Party saying this. TD Economics came out with a study in September about the productivity crisis we are facing in Canada. That report said the crisis is nowhere worse than in homebuilding construction, and we need to incentivize private sector players to get back into building homes that Canadians need and where they can live the Canadian dream.

As I turn back to the parliamentary motion before us, it is about the production of documents, but more importantly, it is what this

government is signalling to the entire country, which is that corruption is okay, mismanagement of public funds is okay and the rules that have governed our country since we came into inception do not seem to matter anymore.

I am calling on the 24 backbenchers who stood against the Prime Minister to stand with the Conservative Party to have a carbon tax election now, to have a housing tax election now or just to have an election, because it is clear that Canadians do not have confidence in the Prime Minister and that the House of Commons really does not have confidence in the Prime Minister any longer.

• (1715)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech, and he mentioned the cost of living and rent.

I would like to hear his comments first on renting. The rent rates are softening. In fact, in Vancouver, rents were down 7% this August compared with the same month last year. This is the ninth consecutive month that rent is down in Vancouver. In Toronto, rents in August were down 7% compared with the same month last year, and it is the seventh consecutive month that rent is going down.

On the cost of living, the Canadian consumer confidence index is at a 30-month high on the back of the low inflation rate of 1.6% and the interest rate cut, for the fourth time, to 3.75%. I would ask the member for his comments on these facts.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, rent is down in the last year, but it is still up over 50% over the last nine years. We could look at rent, but if we look at the overall cost of living, food bank usage is soaring, mortgage costs are up, and the costs of purchasing general goods and buying groceries are up. Everything costs more because of the policies of the government that the member supports, and 7% is not enough relief to give people hope again. We need something radically different from what the government is doing.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking about \$400 million here, which is a big number. We all know the cost of living is up. We all know food banks in this country have seen lineups out the door. The carbon tax is a big issue and so is housing. I mean, the member comes from B.C., and B.C. has one of the highest housing costs in the entire world, not the country, the world. However, this \$8-billion budget overrun, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, is not helping Canadians with the cost of living.

I would say to the member from B.C., with the highest cost of living in the entire world, we can blame the Liberals, and everyone in B.C. knows the problem, certainly in your hometown of Abbotsford.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not live in Abbotsford. I want to make sure the member is addressing questions through the Speaker and not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I have to say that on an MP's salary, you might have a hard time affording a mortgage in the community I live in today.

When we talk about the \$8-billion budget overrun, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, people in Abbotsford say, "We produce a large portion of all the chicken, eggs, dairy, fruit and vegetables that are consumed in British Columbia. They are grown down the street from where I live, but I cannot afford them anymore, because the carbon tax is so high, my taxes are so high and commuting 100 kilometres to and from work every day has drained my bank account."

People are scared in British Columbia. The severity of the challenges we face is only heightened where I live. It is only heightened with young Canadians and newcomers who say, "What happened to the Canadian dream, to the way of life I thought existed in Canada? What happened to the Government of Canada? I thought it was supposed to be a force for good, but all it has done is rob me of my well-being and the future of my children."

• (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not know Steven Chaplin; he is a former senior legal counsel in the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel. To the best of my knowledge, I have never met him. He wrote an interesting story in *The Hill Times*, and I would recommend every Conservative member read the article. This is what he says: "It is time for the House to admit its overreach before the matter inevitably finds its way to the courts which do have the ability to determine and limit the House's powers, often beyond what the House may like." It goes on: "It is time for the House of Commons to admit it was wrong, and to move on." He is talking about the production of papers.

Whether it is this particular individual or the RCMP, the Conservatives are abusing power. It is no different than the leader of the Conservative Party refusing to get his security clearance. It is time the Conservatives start abiding by the rules, respecting the law, doing the right thing and acting on what is in Canadians' best interest, not the leader of the Conservative Party's best interest.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I wish the member for Winnipeg North would review the Speaker's ruling where he found a prima facie case of privilege. Had the government and cabinet listened to the orders of Parliament months ago, we could have either been into a carbon tax election today or gotten to the bottom of their very corruption.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague touched upon the theme of betrayal of public trust, and that is what it is. Those words really resonated with me: "betrayal of public trust". That is what this green slush fund scandal is all about, a \$400-million waste. The cost of living is up, food bank use is up, the carbon tax is up and housing taxes are up. In my

community, one in seven residents is visiting Project Share, our food bank, and it now feeds 120 families a day.

Perhaps my colleague could touch upon why he thinks the government is so lax in wanting to provide those documents. Perhaps he can also tell us what that \$400 million could provide to hard-working Canadians.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I was on the industry committee, so I heard the testimony of Annette Verschuren. She refused to answer any basic questions. I also heard the testimony of former industry minister Mr. Bains, who, I believe, now works for Rogers Communications. They were indifferent about the cost of living crisis that is impacting Canada. The government seems to only care about one thing: protecting Liberal friends and insiders from their duty to serve Canadians. Time and time again, we have asked and pleaded with the government to come clean with Canadians about its corruption and criminal activity as it relates to the \$400 million in the SDTC, or green slush fund. The Liberals refuse to do so because they are afraid of accountability and are hiding behind a cloak of false constitutional arguments to protect their friends and insiders.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, allow me to be crystal clear: The current leader of the Conservative Party is abusing the power of Parliament. This is becoming very well established. He continues to refuse to get the security clearance, which is not in the best interest of Canadians, and it is unacceptable that he is putting his personal interests ahead of the interests of Canadians. The leader of the Conservative Party needs to step up to the plate and do the honourable thing: not only get the security clearance, but also stop the game he is playing. I would argue it is abuse of parliamentary privilege.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets does not have the floor. I would ask him to hold off on his comment.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North has forgotten my quote from page 239 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*:

Disobedience to rules or orders represents an affront to the dignity of the House, and accordingly the House could take action, not simply for satisfaction but to ensure that the House of Commons is held in the respect necessary for its authority to be vindicated.

That is what the loyal official opposition is doing. We are standing up for the rights of all parliamentarians, for the rights of Canadians to have accountability with their taxpayer money that the government abused and does not care about. While they suffer at the food bank, Liberals rest knowing they are obfuscating the House and the well-being and interests of Canadian citizens who just want to get ahead and live their lives accordingly.

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• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, Halloween is a great opportunity to rise in the House and tell scary stories about the Liberals and all their close friends who have been collecting candy since 2015. Trust me, there are a lot of them.

Over the past nine years, we have dug many skeletons out of Liberal closets and gone on witch hunts to unmask all the Liberal “ghouls”. From the sponsorship scandal to the green fund scandal we are talking about today, it all comes back to the man behind the mask, the Liberal Prime Minister.

It is always a privilege for me to stand in the House and proudly represent the interests of the people of Lévis—Lotbinière, no matter what their needs are, and to do justice to the hard-working Canadians of this country. They do not deserve to have their hard-earned money used for partisan purposes or used to grease the palms of some Liberal Party of Canada donors, as we have all too often caught it doing. Let us not forget all those who have been granted privileged access to ministers to talk about their projects. All too often, those projects have served only to line their own pockets, to the detriment of citizens and the future of our country.

This intervention on the privilege motion concerns the green fund scandal. The crux of the problem has not changed: The Liberal government still refuses to send unredacted documents to the police so that they can do their job and determine the scope of the corruption observed in this matter by the Auditor General. What saddens me so deeply about all of this is that, once again, Liberal Party members and the Prime Minister are dashing the dreams, trust, respect and hopes of Canadians.

Let me review the facts. The Auditor General identified irregularities in the procedure used to allocate money to businesses through the green fund, which was intended to help businesses develop solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We in the Conservative Party believe that technology is the best way to reduce our environmental footprint. Technology offers Canada a pathway forward into the future, unlike the punitive anti-economic measures, like the carbon tax, that are being implemented on the backs of Canadian workers and families.

However, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, funnelled much of its funding to companies owned by the members of its board of directors, who were also long-time Liberal insiders. The selection process was rigorous and merit-based, but it was overridden and used in an arbitrary way in order to favour Liberal cronies. So much for fairness, because with the Liberals, friends come first.

In fact, it is the profusion of arbitrary actions taken by this Liberal government that is undermining public trust in this government. This includes gifts to certain corporations over others, favouritism, punitive taxes imposed on certain sectors and the capital gains tax, which creates tax bias. Those are all the ingredients of the Liberal magic potion. If the price of a photo-op government were just a bit of fun now and then, we could live with that. Like any good masquerade ball, it always comes to an end and the secrecy ends with it.

The bill for the Liberals' systematic incompetence has led to the worst consequences in the history of our country, which is practically unrecognizable because it has changed so much in the past nine years. Right now, more than two million people are lining up at food banks because of failed Liberal policies. That is a record number in our country's history. That is a 90% increase from 2019. As former finance minister Bill Morneau said in his memoirs, the Prime Minister tosses aside good public policy in favour of scoring political points.

• (1730)

His golden image is now tarnished in the eyes of his own troops, and many are asking the same question: Is he standing up for Canadians or for himself? As a legislator since 2006, I can say that if he were really standing up for the interests of Canadians, he would call an election, not refuse to comply with the order of the House and to hand over the green fund documents to the appropriate authorities. This is the cause of our current state of paralysis, which is justified and perfectly legitimate.

Like many sneaks, our Bloc friends were once again left high and dry. They are playing the victim card, claiming that they want to work for real this time. However, when the time comes to vote on the side of common sense, their opportunism and hypocrisy always get the better of them, because they want to have their cake and eat it too. Ultimately, the “Liberal Bloc” and the “NDP Liberals” are the same. They are shakedown artists. We have the ultimate proof that, even with a minority government in place, a party like the Bloc Québécois is incapable of making gains for Quebecers and Canadians and carries no weight whatsoever. At most, the Bloc Québécois is good at taking credit for the work and results achieved by others, when in fact they are all talk and no action.

Everywhere in my riding, there is one word on everyone's lips: "election". When will the election be called? My constituents are fed up with this slapdash Prime Minister. They are telling me they want an election as soon as possible so that this minority government can be held accountable for everything it has done. House prices have more than doubled, and the dream of home ownership is gone for an entire generation. In the Canada I once knew, it was normal for anyone in the country who had a decent salary and a decent job to be able to buy a home and live in dignity. Today, this foundational pillar of our society is in jeopardy because of Liberal mismanagement. The Liberal government broke its promise to build homes to keep pace with the country's demographic growth. The immigration floodgates were opened wide, with no regard for the government's ability to provide services. These crazy policies have undermined the Canadian consensus on immigration. Canadians are the most welcoming people on the planet, but ending common-sense immigration policies like those introduced by the previous Conservative government has led to a few skirmishes in this country. It is so bad that even the Liberals had to reverse their infinitely ideological opposition by announcing earlier this week, to everyone's surprise, that they would be reducing the thresholds by about 20%. Unfortunately, it is probably too little, too late.

I dream of being able to go back to the days of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper's government, in which I had the honour of serving. In those days, the issue of immigration levels was a matter of consensus, not a matter that divides Canadians rather than uniting them. However, it is not too late for the government to do what the Conservatives want and adopt a common-sense measure that ties the number of people entering the country to housing construction. The Conservative Party will develop a mathematical formula to respect this rule, which will enable us to lower prices. This formula will make the number of doctors and jobs grow faster than the population. That is the exact opposite of the out-of-control immigration that has taken place under this Liberal government.

As I read recently in an article by Boucar Diouf in *La Presse*, "history will unfortunately remember [the reign of Justin Trudeau] as the reign under which intolerance significantly increased in Canada".

• (1735)

Mr. Diouf adds: "his naive vision of immigration and harmonious co-existence pushed Canada even further toward intolerance".

The Prime Minister has also had the nerve to attack Quebec even more by making all sort of comments about it since 2015, even though the latest polls show that Quebec is more open to immigration than anywhere else in Canada.

This same Prime Minister forced two women out of his caucus. Although Jody Wilson-Raybould and Celina Caesar-Chavannes did not belong to the Conservative party, they were both fine examples of competent and politically courageous people.

In an interview this week, Ms. Caesar-Chavannes recalled how little consideration the Prime Minister had for his colleagues and how hard he was to work with. She described multiple incidents she had to deal with involving the person she was serving as parliamentary secretary, who tried to influence her to change the date when

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she would leave caucus, saying that he could not afford to lose two women on the same day. That type of comment proves he cared more about his image than about the people we represent.

The former MP for Whitby also said that while she was meeting with the Prime Minister to try to work out their differences, he approached her with such contempt and hatred that she had never been so scared in her life to be alone in a room with someone. He would later apologize to her in the House of Commons, which she described as cowardice.

I think it is necessary to look back on this kind of incident to see what a phony the Prime Minister is. For weeks now, his refusal to comply with the House's order has gotten us nowhere. It makes me wonder just how much the Prime Minister is trying to hide. I have to wonder how much political pressure MPs must be under to hide certain information and push certain secret agendas, the same way that Ms. Jody Wilson-Raybould was pressured in the SNC-Lavalin affair.

Considering how many people from his own party have left because of undue pressure, and considering that 24 MPs from his own political party are now calling for his resignation by trying to hold a secret ballot, this Prime Minister's time is clearly up.

The time has come to return to normalcy, both in terms of the transparency that Parliament should show to MPs, but also on the economic front, where powerful paycheques give everyone a chance to live with dignity, without compromising future generations through out-of-control spending that generates insurmountable debt and runaway inflation.

Oddly enough, the Liberals have dug the idea of a high-speed train out of the mothballs in a blatant campaign-style announcement. We will wait and see how much that will cost. It is always strange to see the Liberals pretend they can make everyone's dreams come true as their term winds down. Do they really intend to move forward with this? If they did, I think they would have made it a priority back in 2015, instead of making a last-minute announcement like this, while they are awash in panic and scandals.

It looks like the only ones who still believe in this Liberal government are the NDP. They are like an ex who just cannot let go, even though it is supposed to be over. What is the NDP's problem, anyway? Virtually all Canadians are wondering why the NDP is systematically supporting this dying government. Is it because the NDP leader wants to lock in his pension come February 2025? Is it because the party does not have enough money to run an election campaign? Does it have problems with organizing, volunteers or election sign vendors who want to get paid? It is very hard to know what is going on in the minds of New Democrats right now. One thing we do know is that they are more terrified of an election than they are of Halloween.

Meanwhile, the "Liberal Bloc" had a rude awakening when the deadline for its attempted hostage-taking expired. The Bloc Québécois leader looked like a schoolchild on the Liberals' playground.

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The sovereignist party tried to hold a federalist party hostage, and it sure looked silly when its ultimatum did not pan out. The Senate is now under no obligation to move forward and pass Bill C-282 on supply management.

• (1740)

The Bloc Québécois was so focused on scoring political points that it compromised farmers' legitimate demands. The failed schemes of the leader of the Bloc Québécois show the limitations of that party, which has not been able to accomplish anything significant since its inception.

What did the Bloc Québécois get in return for supporting this government 188 times and preventing it from being defeated? It got absolutely nothing. What is more, the Bloc Québécois's support for more than \$500 billion in Liberal government spending shows that it was complicit in leading Canada into its current situation. The leader of the Bloc Québécois has systematically supported Justin Trudeau's measures, which have increased crime and violence—

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The member from the opposition party knows full well that we cannot name members.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member knows that. He mentioned the name of the Prime Minister. We will keep a close eye on that.

The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, if I did something wrong, I apologize. I am sure that my colleague feels so ill at ease in her party that she has the Prime Minister's name ringing in her ears. I will continue.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois systematically supported the Prime Minister's measures. This ended up—

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

For a month now, the House has been studying a motion of privilege that we are sick of hearing about. However, my colleague is not talking about it at all. He has been talking about the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, the Liberals, about this and that. He is not talking at all about the question of privilege raised by his party. I understand that he too is sick of hearing about it. It has been a month and he can no longer stand to hear his colleagues talk about it, but—

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for raising that issue, but this is debate. I am not sure it is relevant.

The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, my colleague just has to think back to what I said at the beginning of my speech. I spoke about that then, and I will likely speak about it again at the end.

Today, street gangs are distributing drugs in high schools across the province and the country with impunity. I had the misfortune of learning that this phenomenon is also occurring in my riding of Lévis—Lotbinière. The Lévis police were forced to increase their presence when a criminal gang tried to recruit in several of the city's schools. Fortunately, additional prevention services have been made available to students by the police, who are not ruling out increasing their numbers to solve the problem.

Drug quantities have increased dramatically. According to journalist Jessica Nadeau's latest report in *Le Devoir*, over 28 kilograms of cannabis were seized in Quebec high schools in the past five years. Here is a list of other drugs that were seized: 802 methamphetamine and speed tablets, 498 prescription drug tablets, 264 opioid tablets, 51 ecstasy tablets; 219 grams of magic mushrooms, 137 grams of cocaine, 35 grams of crystal meth and 27 grams of crack.

Worst of all, this is only the tip of the iceberg. There are countless incidents of teenagers suddenly dying after using drugs. Then there is the lifelong damage to those lucky enough to survive. An entire generation is being poisoned, and parents are left inconsolable. These drugs have never been so dangerously addictive and deadly.

What is the Bloc Québécois leader doing in the meantime? He does not seem to be making this a priority at all. He supports the Prime Minister most of the time and he is soft on crime. We rarely hear the Bloc Québécois leader speak out against the Liberal measures that led to this public disorder. The Bloc Québécois leader supported Bill C-5 which, under the guise of helping drug addicts and people in our communities, eliminates a number of mandatory minimum sentences for very serious crimes.

This allows drug traffickers and producers to get off scot-free. Impunity reigns. The leader of the Bloc Québécois takes the same naive approach as the Liberals called harm reduction.

The Conservatives' approach is one of understanding the victims of drugs and promoting the associated treatment to help men and women overcome it, but never at the expense of law and order, not at the expense of innocent lives, victims who made the mistake of trying the drug once and ending up hooked on it.

Traffickers are no longer afraid of the government, just as the Prime Minister is not afraid of the leader of the Bloc Québécois one bit. No more slaps on the wrist, no more Netflix sentences. When young people in a country are affected, it is time to restore justice.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister still has a chance to dress up as Superman if the Liberals stop being arrogant, obey the House, comply with the Chair's orders and hand over the documents to the police. The Liberals have handed out so much candy to their friends that they had to create a national dental care plan to fill the cavities. Happy Halloween.

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• (1745)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am amazed by the winding roads some people take to reach their destination.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to obtain security clearance for national security matters. What does my colleague think of the fact that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Auditor General and legal advisors have said that it is precisely for security reasons that documents should not be turned over this way?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, on the subject of safety, I would like to know why this government, which my colleague currently represents, has not worked on the safety of our children for some time. Our schools are under attack by street gangs. They are infiltrated by people who want to sell drugs and destroy the lives of children, parents and our society as a whole. Something must be done.

Will this government finally do its part?

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I know that my constituents are starting to go trick-or-treating. I hope that all Canadians this evening, while trick-or-treating, are safe and that parents check their candies before they give them to their children.

During this filibuster, we have been treated with a lot of tricks. I think we have a lot of tricking going on in the filibuster, including giving figures like what the NDP leader's pension is. We have heard it is \$910,000, whereas the Leader of the Opposition's, once he gets his pension, will be \$3.4 million. I wonder if the member can do some math for us and tell us what the difference will be in their pensions and share whether we should get back to representing our constituents' needs and moving this on to committee so we can address urgent matters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, everyone here in the House, or at least, the members on this side and possibly some on the other side, would like to get back to working for the interests of Canadians.

Unfortunately, the only way to work for the interests of Canadians is to let Canadians choose their government. We have reached the end of a minority government. Its time is up. Politically speaking, the Prime Minister is on his last legs.

Will the NDP finally vote with us to give Canadians hope?

• (1750)

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I am forced to say that I sincerely think my colleague is a hypocrite. He gave a 20-minute speech in which he accused the Liberals of being responsible for all the world's ills, and we agree. We, the Bloc, and the NDP—

The Deputy Speaker: Calling someone a hypocrite is unparliamentary. I invite the hon. member to ask his question in a different way.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I would say that he is a liar. Okay, fine, I will withdraw the words “hypocrite” and “liar”. We will see where I am going with that. For 20 minutes, the member gave a seemingly endless speech in which he insulted everyone in the House and said that the Conservatives were ready to form the government, except that they are not. They are not really ready to do that. They like that the Liberals are in power. They really like that.

We are asking them to move a non-confidence motion. We are now ready to vote in favour of such a motion. They are not ready at all. They have been doing nothing but talk for a month. They are wasting our time. We are not taking care of Canadians' problems. We are wasting time because of them. When will they decide to let this motion go and move a non-confidence motion? We are ready to bring down this government.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague of how much time has been wasted because of the Bloc Québécois. Since 1993, the Bloc Québécois has passed three bills, changed the names of two ridings and declared a national day. That is the Bloc Québécois's record since 1993.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a great answer. He could have added to that list and talked about the things that the Bloc members have not done. My Bloc Québécois colleague says he is ready to take action, but the Bloc members dropped the ball on two votes recently. They just wasted 30 days in the House of Commons.

The question I would like to ask my colleague is the following.

The cost of living is going up, the use of food banks is going up, the carbon tax is going up and housing taxes are going up. In short, everything is going up in Canada. This is causing problems for all Canadians and Quebecers. Everyone is struggling to eat, keep a roof over their heads and heat their homes. These are all realities that the people in our ridings are experiencing. This is not only happening somewhere else; it is happening everywhere.

We are currently dealing with a government that does not want to hand over documents related to a \$400-million scandal. Do members know what we can do with that kind of money? I would like my colleague to tell me what we could actually do with \$400 million.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. This member is doing a great job for his region. He has become a legend.

Privilege

We would have to take that \$400 million and use it to feed Canadians. Since this government came to power, food banks have been struggling to meet demand. Every month, two million Canadians use food banks. It would take a lot more than that \$400 million to feed them. Canadians need steady jobs and more money in their pockets. Taxes are too high. The carbon tax alone has doubled the cost of living in every way across Canada. We are going to eliminate these excessive taxes forced on Canadians.

We are asking for an election to be called as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, happy birthday. Rumour has it you are 55 years old, or something like that, today. If I could sing happy birthday, I would.

I want to quote Steven Chaplin from a story in *The Hill Times*. Here is a homework assignment for the Conservative members: to read the article. If they understand the article, they will understand what they are doing wrong and why they should not be supporting the leader of the Conservative Party's initiative.

This is the essence of the article: "It is time for the House to admit its overreach before the matter inevitably finds its way to the courts which do have the ability to determine and limit the House's powers, often beyond what the House may like." Steven Chaplin is an individual whom members need to take note of.

The leader of the Conservative Party believes he can use his abusive powers to override Parliament, much like when he was the parliamentary secretary to Stephen Harper, who was found in contempt of Parliament. I would suggest something to my Conservative friends across the way, while they ask and beg their leader to do what is right on getting the security clearance and putting Canadians ahead of his own personal leadership in the Conservative Party: Let us put Canadians ahead. Get the security clearance. Let us stop the game and stop the abuse we are seeing on the floor of the House of Commons.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote a Mr. Chaplin, one whose first name was Charlie. However, since he was a silent film star, it will be hard for me to quote him.

He was as silent as my Liberal colleague has been about this government and all the scandals it has managed to cause over the past nine years. We never heard my colleague denounce the sponsorship scandal. We never heard my colleague denounce the scandal involving the green slush fund at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. We never heard my colleague talk about SNC-Lavalin or WE Charity. No, none of that happened. My colleague is both mute and blind.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to this question of privilege, which has been going on for a month now. Nevertheless, I rise with a deep sense of frustration over the fact that today, as always, we are again discussing a scandal of alarming proportions.

It is a scandal that once again highlights the Liberal government's irresponsibility, corruption, and contempt for the people of this land. It has paralyzed the House of Commons for a month now. It is the scandal involving Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC.

Once again, the Liberal government has broken trust with Canadians by misappropriating nearly \$400 million of public funds for its cronies, only to later try to sweep its mistakes under the rug, as usual. Those days are over. There will be no more cover-ups. We will not allow it to carry on with utter impunity and disdain for Canadians, for all my colleagues here, and for the House.

The House ordered that the documents be produced in order to expose all of SDTC's practices. All of us, including the Speaker, demanded that essential documents be handed over so that the RCMP can thoroughly investigate the current Liberal government's questionable activities. We are not asking the Liberals to do us a favour. We are not asking them to do this out of the goodness of their hearts. We are simply asking them to respect Canadians and the authority of the House, especially that of the chair, and to respect the authority of all the Canadians we represent. It is a demand that is part of the legitimate and necessary exercise of the powers of the House. It is a demand that represents the interests of Canadians.

What is this Liberal government doing in response? It is doing what it does best, what it always does: It is shirking its responsibilities and trying to circumvent decisions that make it uncomfortable. It refuses to provide the RCMP with the documents in their entirety, meaning unredacted. That is essentially what we are asking. It is not complicated. This is a serious breach of parliamentary privilege. More than a breach, it is a real shattering of our privilege. It is a direct affront to our democratic institution. It is an attack, a threat, a disgrace.

What is important to understand about SDTC is that we are not talking about a few omissions or administrative errors. What we are seeing is a deliberate strategy, a finely tuned pattern of manipulation to protect all those profiting from this corruption at the expense of honest Canadians.

Let me digress for a moment. This is not the first time I have spoken on this issue in the past month. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, where my colleagues and I heard a wide range of testimony. I know that some of my colleagues on other committees have also heard testimony. Just yesterday, we heard from the former industry minister, who was responsible at the time for this fund, a so-called "independent" organization. The current minister was forced to shut down the fund last June because the scandal had broken and all the corruption had been uncovered. Inevitably, thanks to us, the minister had no choice. The Liberals say that the fund is independent, but in reality, it was the minister who made the decision to shut it down. They obviously do have a responsibility.

I want to recap the facts so everyone can fully grasp the scale of this scandal. This is not a recent affair, nor is it an isolated event. The Auditor General's report published last June reveals damning details. SDTC gave hundreds of millions of dollars to projects that either were ineligible or represented a conflict of interest. The ineligible projects were those that demonstrated no environmental benefit. SDTC is a program that has been around for a very long time. Its goal was to use new technologies to find—

Mr. Speaker, someone's telephone is ringing. It is not mine.

• (1800)

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to take a little break. I think someone is looking for their phone.

It has been found.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, the ineligible projects were those that demonstrated no environmental benefit. SDTC is a program designed to help companies implement green environmental technologies. The Conservative Party is very open to the idea of supporting technologies that can help us, rather than imposing the carbon tax on people. We want to implement new technologies that will help us improve the environment. In this case, the Liberals seemed to forget one detail: SDTC is a fund for implementing sustainable development technologies in Canada, not a fund for helping their cronies.

We are also talking about the environment. The organization was supposed to support environmental initiatives, but \$58 million was invested in ineligible projects. That \$58 million was wasted, with no tangible results for the environment or green technologies. That is outrageous.

I am in business, and I am not getting any subsidies. Quite honestly, none of the SMEs in Canada are getting subsidies. What we all want is for the technologies that are put in place to help the environment to actually work. Unfortunately, the government has thrown away \$58 million.

On top of that, a whopping \$334 million went to projects where there was a blatant conflict of interest. That has been proven. The Conservative Party of Canada is not the one saying that. It is the Auditor General of Canada, who audited all of the records that she had at that time. She had to stop because she ran out of time. That is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the truth about this fund. There are probably a lot more problems. How can we and Canadians stand by when members of the SDTC board of directors directly profited from these public funds?

I have to briefly share a personal story. After losing the election in 2011 by nine votes, I went back to university. I took a course to get a certificate in business administration at Université Laval. The course was given over a few weekends. I relearned some things I already knew, basic things in life. When managing public funds, whatever they may be, there are certain rules that must be followed. I was the mayor of a city, and before I was mayor, I was a supplier to that city. I knew perfectly well that when I became mayor, I would no longer be able to get those city contracts for my company.

Privilege

If I did, I would be personally benefiting from public funds. The course I took at Université Laval is an excellent course. It still exists today, and it trains certified business administrators.

I will digress for a moment. When this government came to power in 2015, it appointed administrators who were friends of the party and who favoured other friends of the party. However, there are training programs in Canada, particularly at the Université de Montréal, Université Laval and Concordia University, that train people to run corporations and organizations.

What is a corporation? It can be a foundation, a fund, a listed company or an unlisted company, for example. These people are therefore authorized to manage funds. They do not have to be appointed. This is where most of the problem originated: Some of the people who were appointed had received funds from SDTC in the past.

When these people were appointed, of course, they declared potential conflicts of interest. However, that did not stop them from awarding themselves money after being appointed to the board of directors. There are other people in Canada who could have done a very good job of managing this fund. In some cases, directors paid money directly to themselves. Afterwards, they said that it was because they were misinformed and got bad legal advice. I went to university for a few weekends to learn about corporate management or business administration. They taught us the basics, the most fundamental things. People cannot profit directly or indirectly from public funds that they administer.

• (1805)

There is nothing complicated about that. It is the absolute starting point for public administration, and it is no different for a member of Parliament. I own a business that I could use to provide services to a lot of people. I could even provide services to myself. I do not, however, because it is not allowed. If I used the services of my own company, it would put me in a conflict of interest. My company employs 12 graphic designers, but I pay someone outside my company to handle my business as an MP. I know I have no choice. It is what I have to do. That is the bare minimum when it comes to potential conflicts of interests.

This \$334 million was taken directly out of Canadians' pockets, out of everyone's pockets, including the people here. That money should have been invested in other innovative, useful and sustainable projects to serve these same Canadians, but instead, it was used to make the rich richer. This is almost a Liberal hallmark. They keep taking money from Canadians to make the rich richer.

Privilege

This type of scandal should not be conceivable, let alone achievable. The government has a duty to protect public funds and ensure that every taxpayer dollar is used with integrity and transparency. However, SDTC's actions and the Liberal government's complete lack of control show just the opposite. In fact, the minister was forced to admit to the House that the situation had really gotten out of hand. He was forced to shut down the fund and reallocate the money to another department, which reports to his own department, in order to be able to continue investing in green technology. The whole board of directors was sacked, and rightly so. It was the only thing to do.

However, the actions of SDTC and the government's complete lack of control prove just the opposite. This government claims to be the champion of transparency and good management. This really bothers me. In 2015, the government, led by the Prime Minister, came in saying that it would be the most transparent government Canada had ever seen. Instead, we have never had a worse government than this one when it comes to transparency. Not only did it fail to manage all the funding, but it is still actively trying to hide the truth today.

These cover-ups are not an isolated incident in this government's recent history, far from it. The Liberals have earned a reputation for their many, many scandals. It is one scandal after the other, each more shocking than the last. They may not know how to outdo themselves when it comes to governing a country, but when it comes to corruption and scandal, they outdo themselves every time.

The current government has always cared more about protecting itself and its allies than serving the interests of the public, the interests of the Canadians who elected it to defend them and represent them. I would remind my colleagues across the way that Canadians are the ones who allow us to sit here in order to serve them and defend their interests, not to make them poorer and to lie to them.

Let us come back to the topic at hand. I was saying that it is fundamental to understand that the SDTC scandal is much more than an isolated scandal. It demonstrates precisely how this Liberal government operates. Conflicts of interest seem to be the norm, not the exception. How can this government hope to retain the public's trust when it so openly favours its cronies while ignoring the concerns of the people?

This contempt for Canadians is completely unacceptable. It is downright insulting. Canadians are struggling to afford food and shelter, to pay for fuel, to deal with the overwhelming cost of living. All of us, from every party, know it. We hear it in our ridings, we see the news and we make it a priority here in Parliament to say that the cost of living is too high, much too high.

I was in my riding last weekend, and I met with people who often call our office. My staff is inundated with calls from people who unfortunately are unable to make ends meet. They are struggling to survive because of rising costs. From inflation to interest costs, all this means that people cannot cope with the cost of living right now. That is really not good news for them.

Quite honestly, the current government is to blame for the increased cost of living. Over the past nine years, the government has doubled the debt. According to a statistic that was released today,

Canada's GDP is tanking compared to that of the United States. Americans have a far higher standard of living than Canadians. That was not the case until just recently. We are moving in the wrong direction.

This morning, at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, Mr. Charlebois, a professor at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, explained that the cost of living is only going to go up. Just this morning, *La Presse* published one of his articles in which he said we need to be prepared because the price of meat is going to be outlandish next year. It already is. The other day, I went to the grocery store and saw a two-pack of T-bone steaks for \$87. I have never seen anything like that in my life. It is absolutely incredible.

We are conducting a study right now on credit card interest rates. Interest on credit cards is going up all the time, not only for users, but also for companies that have payments. Meanwhile, the big banks are making money hand over fist, whereas in other countries there are fixed fees that are much lower than what we have in Canada.

● (1810)

All of these things have prevented the government from making a decision. Today, people are literally drowning in bills they cannot pay, and it is not a pretty sight. As a result, Canadians are unable to meet their basic needs. That is the reality.

We have been debating this privilege motion for a month. If the government wants us to move on to something else, all it has to do is hand over the documents. What is it hiding that is important enough to stop it from handing over documents that we have been asking for for almost a month? This government invariably has to do things its own way. Canadians are tired of this government. It seems to live in a bubble, cut off from the realities of everyday life and completely disconnected from the people it is meant to represent. People were talking to me about it last week, when I was in my riding. They want an election as soon as possible. They are fed up, sick and tired, and they need a change.

Last week was Small Business Week. My riding is full of SMEs, and I am extremely proud of them. I admire their work and I support their activities. I am a proud long-time entrepreneur myself, having been in business for 33 years. I am also proud to say that my daughter just bought my partner's shares, so our company is truly a family business, and like all entrepreneurs, we work extremely hard to create high-quality, well-paying jobs. The most important thing for an entrepreneur is to create jobs.

The SMEs in my riding are really struggling right now. I talk to entrepreneurs every day, and I meet with them every weekend when I am in my riding. My thoughts are with those entrepreneurs who are struggling to do business in this scary economic environment. When I think of the SDTC scandal, I have to bite my tongue, because my remarks could be a lot more aggressive. I am trying to be polite. People are literally disgusted by all the scandals caused by this government over the past nine years and all the money that is going down the drain.

The chair, Ms. Verschuren, came to tell us that she was not responsible since she was no longer on the board of directors. I am sorry, but she was there when the decisions were made. We are responsible for what we do in life for the rest of our lives. We cannot just disappear into thin air just because we are no longer on the board of directors and no longer linked to that. Someone has to take responsibility for this. It is important for the people who were on the board of directors at the time and who were given money through a company to be held accountable.

The business owners all got through the COVID-19 crisis. The lucky ones at the green fund were given a sum equivalent to 5% of all the loans already given to bolster their working capital. I am sorry, but the other businesses across Canada did not get 5% of the loans that they already took out through the fund or at the bank.

We have a lot of work to do. The Liberals have a very big job to do to give us back this money as quickly as possible.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1815)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

October 31, 2024

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 31st day of October, 2024, at 17:05.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop

Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments.

Privilege

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked about training. I congratulate him on going back to university. On the Liberal side, we are offering free training to the Leader of the Opposition to get his security clearance. That is something he could consider.

With respect to the question, I really wonder whether the Conservatives understand the process here. Everyone here in the House agrees to vote to refer the matter to committee, so I wonder why they continue to want to paralyze Parliament.

If my colleague is really sincere about his constituents who come to his office and say that they need help, why does he not agree that we should vote on this and send it to committee so that Parliament can get back to work and get things done?

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the Liberals do not understand. It is very simple. We are requesting, and the Chair is requesting, that the government turn over the unredacted documents to the RCMP. It is not complicated. That is all that needs to be done. Then we can get back to work.

• (1820)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I would like my colleague to know that I do not understand the influence that the NDP has right now on the Liberal Party of Canada. It is undoubtedly artificially keeping the Liberal Party in power. Does my colleague want to share his idea of what image this sends?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, back home we have an expression, “to have someone by the balls”, which refers to something real. The reality in Parliament right now is that there is an opposition leader who essentially has this government's back against the wall, to avoid using that same expression again. Why is he doing that?

Honestly, we do not know since he keeps talking out of both sides of his mouth. On one hand, he says that his party wants to help Canadians because Canadians are struggling. That is essentially what we are saying too. On the other hand, he keeps supporting the government, even after tearing up the agreement they had.

We know that in four months, the leader of the NDP will be entitled to his pension. Is that the real reason? If that is not the reason, then why not trigger an election right now?

*Privilege**[English]*

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the testimony this morning at the industry committee. In the same committee, the superintendent of bankruptcy told us that the number of insolvencies and bankruptcies today is below the prepandemic level; in fact, it is even lower than the 2009 level, when there was a fiscal meltdown in the country. This is because our plan is working. Our actions and our programs are yielding the results that Canadians deserve.

Today, the Canadian consumer confidence index is at a 30-month high, on the back of a low inflation rate of 1.6%. The interest rates are down for the fourth time, at 3.75%, and the Canadian economy is projected to be the best among all the G7 countries in 2025. This is why things are much better than what they are made out to be.

Could my hon. friend give his opinion on this?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. What my colleague is saying or trying to have people believe is that things have never been better in Canada.

What he just said is that the superintendent of bankruptcy said that there may be fewer bankruptcies right now, but that is because there are a lot more proposals for bankruptcy, proposals for agreements with creditors. That means there is an increase. That is the opposite of what he is saying. There are more people who might end up in bankruptcy, but there is an openness by the banks to reach agreements based on proposals. It is like saying that this comes back to accepting 25 cents on the dollar and the rest of the debt will be written off.

That is an absolute demonstration of the current Canadian context, both for businesses and individuals. These days, people are in deep trouble. If I spoke here the way I usually do in real life, the Chair would reprimand me often.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always entertained by my colleague's speeches, and I love the work he does on the industry committee. I would like him to comment, though, in keeping with the theme that he was just asked about, on this morning's industry committee. We had the person known as the "food professor" appear, Professor Charlebois from Dalhousie University, from the great province of Nova Scotia, which I know the Deputy Speaker loves dearly.

Professor Charlebois outlined a very shocking stat in his latest report, which is that 46% of Gen Z are emptying their savings or borrowing money to pay for food. That is an astounding number. For millennials who have families and mortgages, that number is 35%, and he said it is growing quite a bit.

What does the member think might have caused that situation?

- (1825)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, basically, what caused it are the conditions created by this government after nine years in power.

I cannot help but draw a link between what my colleague just said and the question my other Liberal colleague asked me earlier. The two witnesses appeared one after the other and both gave testimony along the same lines. They both said, right now, the new generation will have a harder time paying for food and shelter because the housing crisis is even worse for them. That is why our leader said that he would eliminate the GST on new homes valued at less than \$1 million. That is a very concrete thing we can do.

The government keeps taxing and raising taxes, while we want to help the younger generation get by and, above all, be able to purchase homes.

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago the Conservative government of Stephen Harper fired 1,000 Veterans Affairs staff and closed a dozen Veterans Affairs offices across the country, including in my community of Windsor.

I wanted to ask the hon. member what drives the Conservatives to fire Veterans Affairs staff and to close Veterans Affairs offices in communities across Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, it is funny because the Liberals are acting like cornered rats. They are finished and they know it, so they are bringing up old stories from back in the day, from 10 years ago.

It is now 2024. People are struggling to make ends meet today. They are having trouble getting by every day. Young people are having an even harder time than my generation did. They are the ones we need to think about today.

Veterans are in the same boat. I think that we need to go back to the drawing board because, for the past nine years, the Liberals have done nothing for veterans.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$400 million was misappropriated during this scandal.

Can the member explain how \$400 million could be used to lower the cost of living for Canadians?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we could help veterans, because apparently there is not even one office open for the number of ones closed back then.

There are all sorts of things we could do, especially if we continue in the same vein as the announcements we have already started making. Yesterday, we announced that our next election platform will include eliminating the GST on homes. We are going to keep announcing good news like that.

Privilege

To be honest, I already feel like we are in an election campaign. I am really looking forward to going out and announcing the good news of how the Conservatives are going to lower taxes for the entire population, especially young people.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the same question as the member before me. He mentioned that close to \$400 million was taken out of taxpayers' pockets and given to Liberal cronies.

What could taxpayers have seen the Conservatives do with nearly \$400 million, their money, today?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, just to put things into perspective, \$400 million is an astronomical sum. Considering everything this money could have been used for, especially to help young people, it is a huge amount.

In my riding, some groups are pleading for help. Let me give just one very concrete example involving non-profit food banks. Knowing that two million Canadians, out of our current population of 41 million, are using food banks every week or every month, it can honestly be said that this money could have been put to good use.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to wish you a very happy birthday today. Are you one? Are you two? Okay, it might take up 20 minutes of my speech if I were to continue.

Normally, I would stand up in this place and say it is an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Barrie—Innisfil, but the reality is such that we have an effective standoff going on in this place because of Liberal obstruction through not providing the documents that were requested back in June by Parliament. It was an order of Parliament that was reaffirmed by the Speaker. The privileges of its members have been violated by the government because there are, quite literally, tens of thousands of documents that were not submitted for them to be moved on to the RCMP.

We know that there are that many documents because, publicly, we have heard from the justice department, for example, that it has over 11,000 documents that it has advised the parliamentary law clerk that the Liberals have not submitted to them. It begs the question of how many of those documents from industry and science have not been following the order of Parliament, or from Environment and Climate Change.

There could be, quite literally, tens of thousands of documents that have not been submitted, as per the order of Parliament, so we can get to the bottom of this scandal. How much of that information is being hidden? How much advice from the Department of Justice, ISED and Environment and Climate Change to the board of SDTC is in those documents? What was the cost of that advice to taxpayers, and what were they discussing? How much were they trying to suppress the information for parliamentarians to not become aware of just how deep the rot and the scandal goes of \$400 million being allocated by the board of directors of SDTC in 183 circumstances of this money being funnelled and approved, which we already knew were conflicts of interest?

The Ethics Commissioner had already deemed it a conflict of interest. I have had a front row seat to this whole thing. It was over a

year ago this very issue came to the ethics committee, and as the chair of ethics, I recall we had Annette Verschuren and Leah Lawrence appear before the committee. We actually had the minister appear before the committee, and we could tell, based on the responses to the questions from parliamentarians, with these people who were appearing in front of the ethics committee, that something stunk. Something was not right.

Through the course of time and further investigation by parliamentary committees, and through an Auditor General's report that showed hundreds of millions of dollars being funnelled to board of director members who were not declaring a conflict of interest, we are now just scratching the surface on this thing. This is why it is so important for Parliament to invoke its will and its constitutional right to have these documents go to the RCMP, not to a committee.

It is well known that committees are places where things go to die around here. This is criminal, I would suggest. There are many people who would suggest the same thing. This is why the RCMP needs as many documents as it can to do a proper investigation. As I said earlier, there are literally tens of thousands of documents right now that have not been provided, either through the justice department, or other departments, contrary to what Parliament's order was. That was reaffirmed by the Speaker's ruling.

When we go back and we look at this over the last year, the Auditor General of Canada found that the government, led by the Prime Minister, had turned Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal insiders. We heard this at committee when we had Doug McConnachie in front of us, who was the subject of the recording. Mr. McConnachie had said that this slush fund was on the level of the sponsorship scandal.

● (1830)

However, we found out that we are looking at \$400 million, and the sponsorship scandal, not to diminish it, under the Chrétien government was \$40 million. So, this scandal is 10 times more. The Liberals knew they had a problem, they knew that the oversight was not being done in a manner that protected taxpayers, and that people were actually benefiting and gaining as a result of their involvement on the board.

Privilege

The Auditor General found out that SDTC gave \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that, on occasion, could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or development of green technology. There was \$334 million over 186 cases to projects in which board members held a conflict of interest. Can members imagine if any of us operated in that way? Not only would our professional careers be ruined, but our personal reputations would be too.

I would expect that there would be some criminal investigation into this when we have that level of rot and corruption going on, with \$58 million to projects without ensuring contribution agreement terms were met; they were just giving it away. Of course, one of the companies that was a beneficiary of that was Cycle Capital, which we now know the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was a shareholder in. I checked his registry under the conflict of interest commission tonight, and although he has it in a blind trust, he is still listed as a beneficiary of Cycle Capital, and we know that it received quite a substantial amount of money as a result of what went on.

The Auditor General made it clear that the blame for this scandal falls on the industry minister who did not sufficiently monitor the contracts that were given to Liberal insiders. In fact, we had, as I said earlier, the industry minister appear before our committee, and he told the ethics committee, at the time, that measures were taken to ensure that SDTC was aligned with policies. We subsequently found out that was not the case. It was implied by a whistle-blower that the industry minister had not been truthful in his testimony with the ethics committee. In fact, the whistle-blower had told us that the industry minister was well aware of what was going on within SDTC and that he turned a blind eye to what was going on. It was not until this became public and became a political issue for the government that the Liberals started actually dealing with the rot and corruption that was going on in there and, in fact, hired outside consultants to come in.

At the time, the ethics committee had asked for the unredacted report. Well, guess what we got? We got a redacted report, the very thing that we are standing here today arguing against. The Speaker ruled in favour of making sure that these documents were given to Parliament in an unredacted fashion.

Again, this is a government that, in 2015, came in and said that it was going to be transparent and open by default, and the Liberals have been anything but over the course of their government. In fact, we see that nobody is abiding by the freedom of information, FOI, laws anymore. At the ethics committee, we did an FOI study. We had witness after witness come in front of us telling us that it has taken years to get access to information and that the access to information system has effectively been broken, which is another thing that has been broken as a result of this government.

However, we are talking about \$400 million. What could \$400 million go to? It could go to a lot of things right now. There are families hurting all over this country. In my community of Barrie—Innisfil, similar to what we are seeing across the country, food bank usage is rising and people are stressed. Moms right now are wondering, with mortgage renewals coming up and the cost of groceries, how they are actually going to look after their family. Much of the security blanket they had in the past under previous governments is being ripped from them as a result of the cost of living and

the housing affordability and attainability crisis that is going on in this country right now. These moms, and many of them are single moms, are worried about their families. They are worried about their kids and their kids' future, and about their ability to be able to afford a home.

• (1835)

With respect to food bank usage, we now know that two million people are visiting food banks per month. What could the \$400 million that went to Liberal-connected insiders and cronies have been used for? Food bank usage has increased significantly as a result of the economic policies of the government. Two million people a month, according to a food bank study that was released just the other day, are going to food banks in Canada, a G7 country.

Before I stood to speak today, I pulled the latest statistics from the Barrie Food Bank. Interestingly, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has done a study, and 30.7% of people in Simcoe County are experiencing food insecurity right now. The Barrie Food Bank had 400 first-time visitors. There are 7,000 individuals every month using the Barrie Food Bank. To put that in context, with the population of the city of Barrie, that represents 5% of people in the city of Barrie who are using the food bank right now, in a supposedly prosperous country, a G7 country like Canada. Of the 7,000 people who are using the food bank in Barrie every month, 37% of them are children.

I spoke earlier about moms who are worried about affordability, about how they are going to put food on the table and about paying their mortgage and keeping a roof over their head. The numbers are an indication of just how difficult it is for families in this country. I know from speaking with representatives from the Innisfil Food Bank that its demand has increased significantly as well and is proportionate to what we have seen not just across this country but also to the city of Barrie.

It is not going to get any better, because mortgages are due for renewal; roughly 900,000 are due for renewal in the next little while in this country. Mortgage rates have increased by about 30% to 40%. That means more and more families are going to continue to be under the cost of living and affordability crisis that is a wound inflicted by the government's economic policies.

The other aspect is the carbon tax. We have stood here and put forward, what was it, 12, 14, 20 or 24 motions to axe the carbon tax. We are doing it not because of a political ideological advantage; we are doing it because the carbon tax is impacting people in a negative way. It is impacting the cost of the necessities of life. Everyday things people are buying, such as groceries, gas, consumables and other things, are all subject in the cascading effect of the carbon tax through the supply chain.

Privilege

We are hearing about the people who move the food and the goods, and about the increased cost they are seeing as a result of the carbon tax. We are seeing it among municipalities. The member from Belleville stood up today and talked about \$1.5 million in additional costs to the City of Belleville based on the carbon tax alone. It does not get a rebate.

I have asked the mayors from the city of Barrie and the town of Innisfil to provide us with the cost to their municipalities of the carbon tax, the impact it is having on heating recreation centres, on putting gas in police cars, putting fuel in fire trucks and heating city buildings. It is significant, and all of those costs end up getting passed down to the consumer.

I know the government will say that it gives rebates. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has already shown the difficulty in that argument. Nobody has ever answered this question for me: If I were to take a dollar from somebody, only to give them a dollar back or maybe less, why am I taking that dollar in the first place? It does not make any sense, and it is just costing Canadian families from an affordability standpoint.

The carbon tax is not going to stop. We are at at \$80 a tonne right now. The carbon tax, according to the government, is going to go up to \$170 a tonne; it is going to more than double. It is going to add 61¢ a litre to the cost of fuel.

• (1840)

This is a government that, during the election campaign in 2019, said the carbon tax was not going to go past \$50 a tonne. The Liberals and their Prime Minister stood there and said that during the campaign. Now we are at \$80, on our way to \$170 a tonne.

The information that the Liberals provided Canadians at the time, along with the reassurances they gave them, was not the truth. There was concern at that time about the cost of living crisis and the fact that the carbon tax was going to go up. They did not tell Canadians the truth. The truth is that they have gone beyond the \$50 a tonne that they said they were going to go to, and it is on its way to \$170.

The necessities of life, groceries, fuel, goods that are shipped, and the cost to our agriculture community are all things that will have a material impact on the cost of goods going forward. They will work their way through the market as a result of the carbon tax.

The other challenge that is going on right now is the housing crisis. I touched on that a little. Again, we are talking about \$400 million in a scandal that went to Liberal-connected insiders and cronies. A lot of that money could have been used to offset the cost of housing.

Our Conservative leader came out with what has been universally called a game-changing plan this week, which is going to see the GST taken off homes. This is among other plans in our building homes and not bureaucracy program. That would have an effect on people. It is going to have a great effect, because that saving is going to be passed on to the people who are buying the homes, the ones who can least afford it.

There is a generation, right now, of young people who do not just feel lied to and let down by the government, but who are actually

despondent. Ninety per cent of them are saying they do not have any hope of owning a home. That despondency is a direct result, again, of the economic policies that have been created by the government.

This is one step in a multistep approach that is going to lead to the building of more homes in this country, to working with municipalities and incentivizing them to build more homes. This is not just for the short term, for two or three years, but also for the long term. This is a program that will be instituted to benefit municipalities and homebuilding for a long time to come. That is what we need to do.

I am going to wrap up with the fact that this scandal and the standoff that is happening in Parliament can be resolved. These things can be resolved if the Liberals follow the will of Parliament, their constitutional obligation and the constitutional right that we have to compel documents. That was reaffirmed by you, Mr. Speaker. We could then get those documents to the RCMP so that we can truly understand and give them the investigative ability to understand just how deep and rotten the corruption is.

The other thing that \$400 million can do is buy subscriptions to the National Enquirer and maybe buy tinfoil hats for Liberal members who are peddling conspiracy theories in this place. They have been doing so over the last month. They know they are part of a government that is failing, that has run out of ideas and whose time is up.

We not only need a carbon tax election in this country, but we also need to get back to some sense of normalcy for the sake of all Canadians. This would be a country where people are not divided, where region is not pitted against region, race against race, faith against faith, with the apparatus of the government being used to divide Canadians.

• (1845)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be perfectly clear to members of the Conservative Party. I have made reference to a Hill Times story and I highly recommend the member read it. What we are witnessing is nothing but a game to the Conservative Party. It is intentionally being played because the leader of the Conservative Party has put his personal ambitions ahead of the interests of Canadians.

We are witnessing an abuse of parliamentary process. There is no doubt about that. It is unfortunate that the Conservative leader not only believes he can abuse the authority of the chamber, but also believes that he does not need to get a security clearance, unlike every other leader here, because he does not want to know.

When are Conservative members going to tell their leader to do the honourable thing, put Canadians' interests ahead of the partisan interests of the Conservative Party and the leader of the Conservative Party, and stop the game?

Privilege

• (1850)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I have had the displeasure of listening to the member peddle his conspiracy theories over the course of the last month. I think tinfoil is on sale at Giant Tiger this month if he wants to help support one of our members.

The real travesty is that the will of Parliament is not being followed. The supremacy of Parliament is not being followed. That supremacy has been supported by the Speaker in his ruling. The government has not provided the documents required and asked for by Parliament so we can get to the bottom of this scandal and find out how deep the rot and corruption go with Liberal-connected insiders and cronies. That is the real travesty in what we are dealing with.

Unless and until the government becomes what it said it was going to be, transparent and accountable, which it has not been, and provides the documents, this standoff will continue, with the support of other parties and the Speaker's ruling.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated when my colleague talked about the concerns of young people in this country, their desperation, despondency and feelings of hopelessness. They are concerned about having a home, and the cost of everything is so expensive.

There is one thing I am hearing a lot that maybe the member can speak to. He mentioned briefly the Minister of Environment. The younger generation is very concerned about a healthy world for themselves and the next generations, and here they see the minister, who is responsible for the carbon tax and supposedly for doing everything to enable our country to become even more environmentally efficient, on the wrong side of the discussion tonight. How discouraging is it to see a government that does not follow its own recommendations?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Yorkton—Melville because she brought up an interesting point about the despondency of young people, who, as I said earlier, feel lied to and let down by the government.

In 2015, there was so much hope and inspiration because the new government was going to provide people with opportunity, but what we have seen over the course of the last nine years is anything but. Young people right now cannot afford a home. They are way behind where prior generations were because the cost of everything has gone up. We have young people living in their parents' basement or, worse yet, living in encampments in this country. We know that in Ontario, for example, 1,400 encampments exist today. In Halifax, the latest number I heard was 35 encampments.

These are people who want the hope, prosperity and opportunity this country can provide them, but instead, and this is a perfect example, well-connected Liberals and insiders prosper while everybody else seems to be suffering.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to call quorum. I do not see quorum in the House.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate that we have quorum.

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

• (1855)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member wants to focus on anything but his responsibility as a parliamentarian. The member is misleading Canadians when he does not tell them directly what is taking place in the House.

There is a motion to have this matter go to the procedure and House affairs committee. With regard to the production of documents they are talking about, the RCMP, the Auditor General and other legal experts say this is not a good tactic the Conservatives are using. Conservatives should read The Hill Times story if they want even more detail.

What the Conservative Party is doing is a total disgrace. It is an abuse of parliamentary procedure. When are the Conservatives going to smarten up and allow legislation and allow the government to work with other opposition parties so we can get things done for Canadians? They need to stop the game and allow us to get back to business to serve Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, all the Liberals are happy because their bellies are full, I guess.

The abuse lies on the Liberals' side because it was Parliament, through a majority of parliamentarians representing a majority of Canadians, who wanted these documents, unredacted, to be presented. The Speaker ruled in favour of parliamentarians and that their privilege was being undermined by the government.

The right and supremacy of Parliament is paramount. We have the authority to compel these documents. The Liberals have no authority to prevent these documents from being provided as Parliament has demanded.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Winnipeg North likes to quote The Hill Times. I am going to quote Canada's national newspaper, The Globe and Mail. Two weeks ago today, The Globe and Mail said the Conservatives are right and the Liberals are wrong; the redacted documents should be presented in Parliament; and the Liberals have held everything up. This is Canada's national newspaper, not The Hill Times.

I wonder if the member for Barrie—Innisfil would like to comment on Canada's national newspaper supporting the Conservative Party of Canada in asking for the unredacted documents from the Liberal Party.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member is quoting a story. Is that a legal opinion or just a letter to the editor?

The Deputy Speaker: That is debate.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, it is customary around this place that a lot of information is plucked from different sources to be used for political purposes. I am aware of what the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood is speaking about. I am not aware of what the member for Winnipeg North is speaking about in The Hill Times because, frankly, I do not read The Hill Times.

I look at it this way. The majority of Canadians, represented in this place by a majority of parliamentarians, using their power and supremacy as MPs and as Parliament, have compelled the government to provide these documents in an unredacted form to allow for a proper investigation, not necessarily at committee, where things, as I said at the beginning of my speech, go to die. This borders on criminal activity, and those documents need to be given to the RCMP so a proper and thorough investigation is done to find out just how deep this corruption goes and how criminal this is.

That decision of Parliament, the majority of people, not *The Hill Times*, not *The Globe and Mail* and not the *National Post* but members of this place, determined that we want those documents. The Speaker has reaffirmed that decision and it is up to the government to provide them. We can end this tomorrow if those 11,000-plus documents in the Department of Justice, and probably tens of thousands more in other departments, are provided to Parliament, as was demanded.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to tell my colleague that she was right; I probably called the Prime Minister by his name. As someone who holds the rules of the House in high regard, I withdraw those words from my speech and I hope she will forgive me without delay.

The Deputy Speaker: It was the right thing to do. I thank the hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière for his intervention.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets has the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those who are tuning in may be curious as to why we are debating the wasteful spending of \$400 million, a funnelling of \$400 million of taxpayer money to the companies of Liberal insiders, appointed by the Prime Minister.

What could we have done? The member for Barrie—Innisfil spoke very eloquently about what could have been done with \$400 million of taxpayer money to solve the food and housing crises. As we know, food bank usage has doubled. We know that the carbon tax is a major contributor to food inflation. We know that the food professor, Professor Charlebois, spoke this morning at the industry committee about the impact of these policies on increasing folks' borrowing.

It is a terrible thing that we have to be here because the Liberal government is filibustering and hiding from the taxpayer documents that three parties of the House, the majority of members, have demanded to be turned over. It is parliamentary privilege. It is the ultimate parliamentary privilege. The Liberals have come up with lame excuses. They have given up on their charter arguments, which were dismissed after we pointed out that, like any other business, it is a business that the government owns. When we find potential criminal activity, we turn it over to the police. In addition, the police could do this.

The Liberals have claimed that they are unable to do this. If they could not do it, then why did nine departments turn over unredacted

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documents? However, the hypocrisy is that 19 have not. The most egregious one is the department of industry, which was responsible for the Liberal green slush fund. It has redacted almost every single document it has sent, and it has many it has yet to send. What is it hiding? We know it is hiding more and more diversions of taxpayer money.

I will tell members why. The Auditor General only sampled a small portion of the transactions, 226 of 420 transactions in that five-year period. We asked the Auditor General if she would audit all of the 420. Do members know what the Auditor General wrote back? The Auditor General said she did not need to because her sample, under accounting standards, is statistically valid for all 420. That means that over \$700 million of the \$836 million under that period would have gone to Liberal insiders. There has been no scandal bigger than this in terms of a diversion of taxpayer money to insiders of the government in the history of this country if we are talking about \$700 million.

These Liberals have no shame. The Liberals are insensitive to the pain of Canadians while over two million people a month are lining up at food banks, a number that is growing every month; while people cannot pay their mortgages and rent; and while we have a carbon tax, which is driving the cost of everything up, that the Liberals intend to quadruple. They care nothing about the pain of Canadians. They care about covering up the funnelling of hundreds of millions of dollars to Liberal insiders' companies while they enrich themselves and Canadians line up in food banks in record numbers. They are having their Marie-Antoinette moment of letting them eat cake. We all know what happened to her. There was also King Charles I, who defied Parliament although Parliament's reign was supreme. Do colleagues know how it was supreme? King Charles I lost his head over the issue of trying to say that the King, who, in this case, is represented by the government, was superior and more important than Parliament.

Why is it that the Liberals are doing this when a majority of Canadians, represented by a majority of MPs in the House, have demanded this? Why would the Prime Minister's personal office, the Privy Council Office, have said to redact the documents and blank them out, contrary to the House, and contrary to the Privacy Act? The Privacy Act says that, if the House wants unredacted documents, it can get them. Why do the Liberals not want to do that? It is because they are covering up for their cronies and their insiders. They are covering up their corruption.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

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• (1905)

[English]

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to continue what I think is an important question. As a proud member of the environment committee, we have undertaken, at the request of the government, a study of the factors that led to the Jasper wildfire that devastated that community, leaving 2,000 people homeless and roughly \$1 billion in damages.

What this investigation has revealed are staggering levels of negligence or incompetence. I am not sure what is the better word to use here. When I asked, in question period, how much incompetence it takes to get fired from a Liberal cabinet, I did not get a very clear answer, so I wanted to come back for a little bit more clarity on what, in fact, it does take to get fired from the Liberal cabinet.

At the time, the parliamentary secretary replied, stating that the “government did everything it could to prevent the wildfire.” This is clearly and demonstrably false, but the Liberals simply refuse to take any responsibility, to show any humility for the possibility that maybe they could have done more and that they did not, in fact, do everything they could have done.

The reality is that, starting in 2017, the minister of environment at that time, former minister McKenna, began to receive letters from experts warning that Jasper was a tinderbox waiting to explode and it was not a matter of if; it was just simply a question of when. Those individuals who know the region and know the industry pleaded with the Liberal government of the day and were dismissed. The individuals were told “Everything is in hand. Do not worry. We have it. Jasper is going to be fine. Everything is fine.” It reminds me of what is currently happening under the Liberal government: the gift that in a burning room around us everything is fine.

It was no different in 2017 than it is now. The emails of that time showed discussions that there may have been political perceptions at play regarding whether there would be prescribed burns, which are an important tool that has been used for generations in this country and around the world. However, the environment minister's department, Parks Canada, only cleared a very small amount. As former prime minister Harper said when talking about the future Liberal government's deficits, it was just the teeny-tiniest amount of a percentage of the acres necessary to ensure that the area around Jasper would be protected. Worse, when the disaster struck, trucks were turned away. Twenty trucks and 50 firefighters were turned away. Worse, they realized after they were turned away that Parks Canada, for some reason, had bought the wrong fitting hookups with the wrong threading on the hydrants in that area that did not align with those in the rest of B.C. and Alberta.

What we have seen through this investigation is simply a failure and a refusal to accept any responsibility or acknowledgement and show any humility that maybe the government of the day did not do enough. My hope is that we might see a bit of a shift in that because the evidence is irrefutable, that the Liberal government did not do everything that it could to prevent this fire. I will ask again: When

will the Minister of Environment be failed for his either negligence or incompetence?

• (1910)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that we are back here despite the fact that Jasperites have actually pleaded now with Conservative politicians to tone down the political rhetoric on the disaster that claimed 30% of Jasper and the life of 24-year-old firefighter Morgan Kitchen.

In committee and here in the House of Commons, the Conservatives have persisted in making this a political issue. I hate to join them, but the fact is that between 2010 and 2015, the Conservatives completely ignored Jasper altogether. The Stephen Harper deficit action reduction plan cut more than \$30 million a year from Jasper's wildfire prevention budget. This meant that, from 2010 to 2015, there was almost no mechanical thinning and there were very few prescribed burns.

That \$30-million annual cut had an impact on 1,600 jobs and left the park worse off. In 2016, when we took power, we provided \$42 million to Parks Canada. Since 2019, we have invested over \$800 million. This is all incremental money, because the Harper Conservatives did nothing, to improve wildfire management, support provinces and territories and train over 1,000 firefighters. Our support did not stop there.

In budget 2021, our government committed \$100 million over five years in Parks Canada wildland fire funding to allow critical firefighters conducting risk reduction, preparedness and response.

Our ability to control the weather or extreme weather in the face of unprecedented climate change and drying from the effects of burning fossil fuels is not absolute. We can work with various other jurisdictions, and we can do the mechanical thinning and prescribed burns. We can work with indigenous communities, such as the Indigenous Leadership Initiative and the Indigenous Guardians, to conduct some of those prescribed burns. This has a really positive impact, but that has not stopped the Conservatives from amping this up and implying that this was some kind of human error.

That is not what the witnesses at committee have said or what Jasperites have asked for. I will read a little of what Jasperites wrote recently in the Jasper Local, a newspaper native to Jasper. This is called “Recipe for disaster: Misinformation and wildfire”.

It reads:

Record dryness, extreme heat, high winds, and a lightning storm. This summer in Jasper National Park, all of the ingredients of a recipe for disaster were in place.

Now, two and a half months after that disaster came to pass, another set of circumstances—misinformation, toxic politics and facts-starved social media blowhards, desperately looking to pin blame—have lined up to wreak havoc.

I am sorry. I digress, but that is referring to the member opposite. It continues:

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Jasper has taken some big punches. But if we're going to get up from the mat, we first need to know we're in each others' corner.

We'll need to trust each other. We'll need to band together.

And we'll need to ignore the bad actors trying to make political hay from our crisis.

July 22 had all the ingredients for an unprecedented disaster.

But if we can put politics aside and filter out good information from bad, Jasper—the town and the park [and all the people]—has all the right ingredients to make its rebuild unprecedented, too.

That is what our government is focused on. We are focused on fighting climate change and rebuilding Jasper.

Mr. Brandon Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I am frustrated by the continued effort to distract and divert from the realities. The monetary spending by the government that the parliamentary secretary mentioned is important because the government should be nimble. It needs to react to, in this case, the pine beetle infestation and when the actual impact of the standing deadwood and the fuel load that was in front of Jasper was relevant. In 2011, it was not. In 2014, it was, and 2017 is why warnings began then.

The people of Jasper deserve answers. They deserve truth. They do not deserve excuses, diversion and people trying to say that we are being political whereas they are not. That is really frustrating. Any level of negligence in any other institution or job would be reason for firing.

This is on track with the current Liberal government. It blames everybody else for every single part. It did nothing. It did not do enough to prevent this fire. It should have done more, and I would love to hear why it did not.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, that is a little rich coming from somebody who worked in the government with Stephen Harper, which did absolutely nothing to prevent wildfires or to have mechanical thinning or prescribed burns. That left a long hangover of inaction that our government took action on. If the member wants to talk, we have a committee meeting on Monday. We can talk then. The reality is that our government undertook a mountain pine beetle strategy in 2016. That was months after we got elected. We have invested millions of dollars into that program. We have done the prescribed burns. We have done the thinning.

I want the member opposite to stop politicizing a wildfire that was started by lightning. It is absolutely disgusting. Jasperites have asked us very clearly to cut it out. They are trying to rebuild, and people are retraumatizing Jasperites by making this such a political issue. The member should read the article and cut it out.

● (1915)

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to rise this evening on behalf of Saskatchewan's small businesses, communities and people against the NDP-Liberal government's greedy carbon tax.

Canadians are rightly fed up with the Prime Minister and his cruel tax. I hear it at each opportunity I have to meet with people as I travel throughout my riding. Their frustrations, despair and desire for a change of government grow day by day.

Let us start with the facts. The Liberal carbon tax increased to \$80 per tonne on April 1 of this year. If the government has its way, the goal is to quadruple the tax to \$170 per tonne by 2030. Let us also be clear: That means the carbon tax will be quadrupled on everything Canadians buy. From gasoline to clothing to fresh produce, the carbon tax is a punishing tax that affects every pocket-book decision a family makes.

It is not a matter of a mere 3¢ more per litre of gasoline or whether the federal carbon tax charge is clearly defined on a monthly energy bill. Time and again, the Liberals fail to understand a very simple truth about the carbon tax. When they tax the farmer who grows the food we consume, or any product for that matter, they also tax the trucker who ships those goods. The farmers, the businesses and the truckers have no choice but to pass those added costs on to consumers. The government knows that. That is why families are paying an extra \$700 for groceries this year. That is why food bank lines and homeless encampments have become all-too-familiar sights in our towns and cities. It does not even look like Canada.

The carbon tax is quite literally a tax on everything that only gets more burdensome year after year, all while Canadians struggle to make ends meet in the cost of living crisis. None of my constituents voted for this, and that is not an unrealistic statement at all. Those who voted to elect the Liberals in 2015 were told by the Prime Minister that his carbon tax would max out at \$50 per tonne. They were falsely told they would receive more money back through rebates than they paid in taxes.

Shockingly, they are still being told the same old story by the NDP-Liberals. Those assurances have been completely thrown out the window. The stories of desperation we hear from our constituents do not align with what the government says, and neither do the hard numbers. It came as no surprise to the House when the Parliamentary Budget Officer released an updated carbon tax report that shows most Canadian families are worse off as a result of the carbon tax.

In my province of Saskatchewan, by 2030, the average family will have to pay \$894 more in carbon taxes than they get back in rebates. It is in the numbers. That is second only to Ontario families, who will have to pay \$903 more. Canadians will not only have \$1,000 less in their pockets to provide for their families, but the carbon tax scheme will shrink our economy.

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The PBO estimates that by the start of the next decade, the Liberal fuel charge will increase the federal deficit by \$4 billion as a result of decreased employment and investment income. This aligns with the NDP-Liberal government's own data, which it shamefully tried to hide from Canadians. The Liberals know the carbon tax will cost the Canadian economy \$30.5 billion per year by 2030.

This is only further proof of what Conservatives have been saying since the inception of the carbon tax. It is nothing more than an expensive scam. It is not an environmental plan. It is a tax plan. What an insult to the people of this country, and particularly the people of Saskatchewan. My province is known globally for its environmental stewardship and innovation. We are proud of what we do and we will continue to do it without a carbon tax on our heads.

● (1920)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start. First of all, my father used to live in Saskatchewan. I like it very much there, but I think it is a bit rich to suggest that it is world-famous for its environmental stewardship, when the vast majority of its electricity is generated with coal. It is not 1905; we can do a lot better than burning coal to create electricity.

Manitoba is right next door to Saskatchewan, and it has an 85% clean grid. Ontario also has a relatively clean grid, almost 80% I think, and Quebec's is close to Manitoba's. Manitoba actually has the cleanest grid in the world. I love Saskatchewan. I have spent a lot of time in Regina. I love it there, but its grid is not clean; it is filthy. Coal is a terrible way to generate electricity, and Premier Moe, who was recently re-elected, boasts about it all the time.

I am not surprised that I am standing here with the member, as she blames absolutely all of Canada's challenges on carbon pricing. Yesterday the Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, who has been in the House for over 20 years, continually referred to the inflation rate of food in Canada as 36% higher than it is in the United States. That is factually incorrect. It is actually closer to the opposite; food inflation in the United States is higher than it is in Canada, and that is in the absence of a national price on pollution, or carbon tax.

Canada has a federal price on pollution and a backstop program, which Saskatchewan utilizes, because as Premier Moe pointed out, he looked at other options but they are all too expensive so he decided to go with the federal backstop program. It is really important to recognize that when we look at the entire country, we do have a federal price on carbon. It is efficient, sends more money back to eight out of 10 families, is lowering our emissions and, since our food inflation is lower than in the United States, is not having an impact on food inflation.

Food is too expensive in Canada; we know that, but we need real solutions. We also know that axing the taxes is not going to do it. I spoke to Sylvain Charlebois about it today. I asked him clearly, "Will axing the tax lower food prices at grocery stores?" The answer is no. There are jurisdictions with higher food inflation that have no price on pollution. It is simply not the case; food is not

taxed in Canada, and carbon pricing does not have a material impact on food inflation.

One last thing is that the member said that nobody in her riding in Saskatchewan voted for carbon pricing. That is also incorrect, because she ran in the last federal election under Erin O'Toole, who had an environmental plan. He was a good progressive Conservative, something that the far-right Conservatives have completely abandoned. They will not even acknowledge that human activity and burning fossil fuels have a demonstrable impact on climate change, our warming planet, extreme weather and all of the challenges that we are facing.

The number one cause of food inflation around the world is climate change. If we do not want to fight climate change, then we are basically going to give up. The Conservatives want to give up, throw their hands in the air and say that climate change is not human-caused; it is in the Almighty's hands, and they are not going to bother trying to lower our emissions. Instead they are going to keep burning coal to generate electricity, and they are not going to apologize for it.

The Conservatives are not going to be accountable for their actions, and they are also not to acknowledge that, in the last federal election, the member ran under the leadership of Erin O'Toole, who had a program to price pollution. We all remember it, because it was billed as "The more you burn, the more you earn." It was sort of like a catalogue of green products that people could purchase with their points, and people got more points if they burned more fossil fuels. It was widely regarded by environmental NGOs and researchers as ineffective and not a good way to implement carbon pricing.

However, the guy who won a Nobel Prize in Economics for carbon pricing, William Nordhaus, says that our plan is getting it right. We are lowering our emissions, fighting climate change and fighting for affordability. The Conservatives cannot get past their three-word slogans.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, my province is known globally for its environmental stewardship and innovation, and we made a difference at the last COP convention. Much of our stewardship and innovation was practised and perfected long before the Prime Minister took power or before carbon tax was even on the table. We are consistently ahead of the curve and have made the investments and sacrifices to show for it. We will continue, but the carbon tax is not required.

Middle-class Canadians are losing ground, and people wishing to join the middle class have no confidence that the NDP-Liberal coalition will ever get them there. It is no wonder the Prime Minister's numbers have plummeted, but it is not that simple; every single member of the Liberal party and of every other party in the House but ours is complicit in the despair we see across this country.

It is time for the NDP to accept responsibility for its hand in the carbon tax catastrophe, and it is time to allow Canadians to vote in the carbon tax election so they can select a common-sense Conservative government that will axe the tax once and for all.

• (1925)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, for my rebuttal, I am just going to read from Trevor Herriot. He is a Regina-based writer, naturalist and grassland advocate.

He wrote, "As representatives from around the world were starting to gather in Montreal at COP15 to work toward an agreement to stave off biodiversity collapse, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe decided it was a good time to say a few things about his province's environmental sustainability and stewardship."

I suppose that is the record that the member is referring to.

Herriot continued: "No matter that Saskatchewan was ranked dead last in the environmental report cards handed out to the

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provinces by the Conference Board of Canada. According to Premier Moe and the new website he launched, 'Saskatchewan has some of the highest-quality and sustainably produced food, fuel and fertilizer, that a growing world needs.'"

That could be true, but it has nothing to do with the environment.

Herriot continued: "A quick glance at the website, filled with images of hard-working people out on the land, reveals a set of measurements carefully curated to show that 'in the areas of sustainable resources, environmental stewardship, community support and clean energy Saskatchewan is rising to the challenge.'"

However, when we looked at the numbers and applied some of the international standards, we realized that Saskatchewan is not doing anything on endangered species protection. It is not doing enough on protected and conserved areas. It is still burning coal to generate electricity. It is not doing enough to protect the wetlands and its grasslands, and it is not doing anything on climate action.

As such, I am sorry that the experts disagree. The Saskatchewan government is not an environmental steward.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to standing order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:26 p.m.)

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