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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 25, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1105)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion, of the amendment as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this debate about the slush fund corruption, the Liberals are always trying to distract with something else. The latest distraction is the two-month temporary tax trick, which everybody knows will not address the root issues facing Canadians.

Could the member comment on that, please?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a government that uses band-aids solutions. It has no real solutions to anything. It does it, as we call it, death by a thousand cuts. The people who are supposed to benefit the most from these measures, like seniors and people with disabilities, are left out. Funnily enough, when Canadians cannot even put food on their table, or cannot even afford to buy groceries because they are so expensive, the government gives them money it thinks they need to buy toys, or to buy liquor or to go to a restaurant. That is a joke. The government does not want to bring forward any real solutions. The NDP-Liberal government has to go.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what advice would the member give the current government?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, axe the carbon tax and call an election as soon as possible. That is what Canadians want. That is what Canadians are expecting us to do.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the leave of the House, I am going to take a moment, as a parliamentarian and as a Canadian, to address what happened this weekend.

We saw an out-of-control mob take over the streets of one of the country's biggest cities. We saw people openly and proudly spewing hatred, spreading violence and thumbing their noses at the values that every single parliamentarian in this place holds dear. They were burning cars, injuring police officers and chanting slogans like the final solution was coming.

I do not know what kind of Canada this is, but it is certainly not one that I recognize. I know many Canadians feel exactly the same way after watching that.

The Prime Minister's go-to response after an incident like this one is to say that this is not Canada. However, we have to reckon with the fact that this is very much Canada. This is, of course, after he sided with the outrageous decision of the International Criminal Court drawing a false equivalency between a Liberal democracy and a terrorist organization that attacked that Liberal democracy last year, which emboldened the very supporters who took to the streets to almost burn down a city. Our country is no longer a haven for law and order, for truth and justice, for peace and for the freedom we used to have.

Instead of talking about all of this, we are still here after two months of demanding the documents in this place, demanding that the Liberals turn over the documents to the police. Instead of debating the very real issues and the consequences to Canadians that happened, the violence that poured out into the streets over the last number of evenings, and days if someone was on the campus of Concordia University, we are still talking about this.

We have become a nation where the rights of bigots and violent rioters trump the rights of freedom of religion and, sadly, of personal safety. This is something that I never thought I would say on the floor of the House. We have become a nation where the grievances of a small, petty, lawless minority govern the lives of a larger law-abiding majority. We have become a nation where we have lost the ability to put a stop to even the most despicable behaviour.

Instead, day after day in the House, we demand the same thing from the same government that refuses the same order. Day after day, we are asking the government to release the documents instead of talking about the issues with which Canadians are seized. This is a nation where it is no longer extraordinary to wake up to read that another synagogue has been firebombed, or that another Jewish business was vandalized, or that another bomb threat was made at a Jewish school or that gunshots flew through the windows.

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Kids as young as 17, 18 and 19 are being arrested for crimes. Children in our country are being turned against one another, blinded by our ability to teach even the most basic tenets of respect and critical thinking, with the woke academics pushing DEI ahead of introspective thought and their unions that have become a bastion of ideological drivel that has now become dangerous and has spilled out into our streets. Hate crimes in our country have more than doubled over nine years.

Instead, we are still talking about a document production order two months later in the House, documents that the Speaker told the government to produce, documents that the Speaker told the government to turn over to the RCMP. That is the natural consequence of a Prime Minister and a government that cannot even utter the most basic condemnation of radical and extremist behaviour in the country, who send one group of MPs to say something to one community and a different group of MPs to say the exact opposite to another community. Those days are over.

That is how it works in the Prime Minister's Canada, but that is not how it works in Canada. I will say one thing, because we have talked about it in the House and, most recently, from comments from the government House leader. Bouncy castles, hot tubs, outdoor barbecues and a protest blocking several blocks in a single city honking equals a national emergency, frozen bank accounts and prosecutions. However, rioting, targeting, harassing, intimidating the Jewish community for more than a year; torching cars, shooting synagogues and schools; calling for violence, murder, death; and celebrating actual terrorists carrying flags of terrorist organizations for over a year in our country equates to "peaceful protests" encouraged by members of the House. That is shameful and every single Canadian sees it now.

• (1110)

What is happening now is a hallmark of the government, a government that has held this place up for two months without turning over documents in this latest scandal of \$400 million tax dollars and 186 conflicts of interest broken. There are ministers who cannot keep their jobs because they have misled the Canadian public and the House about their identity. The government has come to that. It has become a hallmark of the Prime Minister's leadership, which has divided Canadians based on every discernible characteristic, of race, religion, gender, age, wealth, vaccine status, and the list goes on and on.

What happens when the same Prime Minister systematically attacks the pillars of our country, whether it is our criminal justice system, our charter of freedoms, even our national symbols? He took Terry Fox out of the passport and replaced it with a squirrel. He allowed those who got the passport to take their citizenship ceremony on Zoom. That is a shame. We should have known this, because he told everybody that Canada was a "post-national state" with "no core identity".

It is what happens when the cornerstone of a Liberal government's agenda is to open our borders and let in terrorists and law-breakers with no background checks, then call anybody who questions it a racist. Frankly, this weekend has shown everybody that Canadians are tired of it. They are tired of the government. They are tired of it holding up the debate in the House without handing

over the documents that the Speaker told it to hand over. Canadians deserve to know where the \$400 million in tax dollars went.

The Prime Minister and the Liberal government have made our country a playground for foreign interference, for division, for people who hate us to come here, and they have rolled out the welcome mat. Then what did the Prime Minister do? He left us in the cold. The chants of death to Jews grew louder in front of synagogues. He ignores calls for safety and security. As his threats to communities got more intense, he ignored and silenced the voices in his own caucus, voices that are supposed to be the ones speaking out, the voices that are supposed to be standing up for their communities, that are supposed to have a seat at the table. He has shoved them out of the room and does not listen to them anymore.

As the masked mob took over the streets of Montreal, the Prime Minister decided it would be better to spend the night dancing. My question is this. When was he told and after he was told, did he stay there? Why did it take him an entire day, until 12 o'clock the next day, to utter even the most basic condemnation of what happened in his own city that night?

This is a country that welcomed generations of people from around the world, gave them shelter from persecution, and now we see that in our streets. This is a country that used to stand up for our allies and for values around the world. This was a country that wherever people came from, whoever they were, they could come here, become a Canadian and be proud of it. We are not that country anymore. It breaks my heart to see it and I am sure it breaks the heart of every Canadian to see and witness what happened this weekend.

Glossing over the clear problems and pretending they do not exist, as the Prime Minister does, is no way to run a country. It is no way to even run a Parliament. He certainly has not acquiesced to that demand we are still here for today.

When someone has the courage to stand and say that what is happening here is wrong, that they refuse to stand by it because they love what is being destroyed, that is a country worth living in. This is the kind of leadership and courage we need. That courage is growing. It is not only growing with me, but with Canadians right across the country, from all stripes, from coast to coast. They want the country they used to know back. Canadians have had enough of the virtue signalling, the holier-than-thou preaching, the lawlessness, the out-of-control crime, the free drugs and the chaos in our streets.

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• (1115)

Canadians just want to go to work, raise a family and be able to afford a decent home in a safe neighbourhood. They want to do that without being told how to think by some out-of-touch politician in Ottawa. Canadians just want to wake up from this woke nightmare and bring back the Canada we used to know. These are not the Canadians that we find occupying the streets of Montreal, rioting violently. They are not the ones camping out on the front lawn of a university campus for months at a time or engaging in terrorist cosplay weekend after weekend.

They are the Canadians we find on a shop floor, in a small business along Main Street, in legion halls, in town squares and in communities everywhere. They might be quiet, but they are the real heart of our country. They are going to have a champion when we elect a common-sense national majority Conservative government. We are going to deliver a country that is finally respected on the world stage and does not make headlines with what is happening in our streets.

With that, I want to transition to the topic that has brought us here, day after day, over the last two months. For me, it is the third time in just a few weeks that I have made one simple request of the Liberal government, which is to release the documents. The Liberals could end this today, right now. I suspect that this is exactly what every member of the Conservative caucus has said, day in and day out. It is what we will say today to hold the government to account, to make sure that it hands over the documents and tells Canadian taxpayers exactly where it spent that tax money.

The House and every single Canadian taxpayer deserve to know how much money was wasted, just how the government wasted it and exactly who got rich. The evidence has been missing for months. Now the Liberals will stop at nothing to continue to keep up the secret that has had us here for week after week and now month after month as they fight tooth and nail to hide the paper trail.

It is said that the third time is the charm, but I am not feeling particularly hopeful today, in terms of getting the documents. We have seen the extent to which the government will try to cover this up, day after day, with thousands of redacted documents. The government is relying on the furthest extent of its power to keep information secret.

We can let that sink in. For everybody watching at home, I say that the Liberals have paused Parliament. They have thrown sand in the gears of every single one of their agenda items, in every single way that they claim to be helping Canadians. Every piece of legislation, every motion, everything has come to a grinding halt because the Liberals have a secret; they are keeping that secret from Canadians.

If only the Liberal government would tell us what is behind the black lines on those pieces of paper and hand over the missing documents, this crisis of Parliament would be over in just one minute. It is that simple. If the government had nothing to hide behind those black lines and those missing documents, then it should not be such a problem. It would tell us what it is withholding in terms of information. Again, the Liberals are willing to put their spending plans on hold. All their fiscal estimates and every piece of legislation are

on the line. This behaviour is nothing short of crazy and paranoid, if anybody is watching this. What are they hiding?

After nine years of the Liberal government, there is a culture of corruption in Ottawa, and everybody now sees it. It is a culture that leads those at the top to think that they are immune from accountability, that they can reward their well-connected insider friends at the expense of everyone else. It leads them to think that the rights of Canadians and of Parliament do not really matter. However, these rights do matter. The government is certainly not immune from accountability. We will make sure of that, just as every opposition has done for hundreds of years in this system.

While Canadians are certainly taking notice of the matter at hand today, they are also paying close attention to another matter, or should I say to someone else. Our old friend, the other Randy, is a guy made up by a minister of the Crown in an effort to weave a web of lies around fraudulent business activity. It is another example of just how out of touch and out of control the Liberal government has become.

• (1120)

Let us recap the saga. It was against the law for anyone conducting government business to carry on with their business activities. That should be obvious; that was a blatant conflict of interest, similar to the 186 conflicts of interest that we are talking about today. However, the former minister of employment seems to have contravened those rules, and messages showed up of conversations between partners at the minister's old firm and a certain Randy. Those messages clearly showed that the minister was breaking the laws that he had sworn to uphold, but the former minister insists that it was not him; it was a different Randy, but he just could not tell us Randy's last name or even who Randy was. All the records show that there was nobody else at the firm with the first name Randy, so who is the other Randy? I do not know.

The story does not stop there. While he was sitting around the cabinet table, the former minister's old company got tens of thousands of tax dollars, which is something that was reported at least two months after the required disclosure deadline. However, it gets better. As a part of these contracts and a part of the marketing efforts of, I suspect, the company that the other Randy was engaged in, the former minister's company branded itself as 100% indigenous owned, meaning that the former minister was indigenous. He publicly reaffirmed his claim to have indigenous heritage or bloodlines several times. The Liberal Party itself took advantage of that too and included him in a list of indigenous MPs. Now we know that none of that was true. It was a farce from start to finish. The former minister not only misled Canadians but also perpetuated a very long series of injustices against indigenous communities and stole from them. He stole resources meant to help indigenous people in order to benefit and enrich himself.

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We tried to get answers about all of this; again, the Liberals and their henchmen did everything possible to stand in the way of accountability. Minister after minister, with a mic in their face, said they had confidence in him. However, from his own business partners, we had radio silence. Their numbers were disconnected, and their emails were deactivated; the business partners were nowhere to be found. Nevertheless, ministers in the current government said that they had full confidence in the minister, just a day before he decided that he was going to step aside to clear his name. The former minister magically got his business partners to disappear and somehow convinced his own cabinet colleagues that he still had the confidence of Canadians, after misleading this place over and over again.

Any one of these things would have gotten any minister fired. I was here as a staff person when a \$16 orange juice would have gotten someone fired as a minister. Today, we are seeing the refusal to hand over documents and turn over documents to the police as ordered by the House. This is not only a breach of parliamentary privilege but also part of a long series of events and a culture of corruption that have become hallmarks of the Liberal government and of Ottawa. It is very unfortunate, and we will stand here day after day and month after month and demand accountability from the government on the other Randy, on the minister of the Crown, on these documents and on every other scandal that is unravelling at the feet of the current government.

This is probably the worst part of it: Liberals themselves are now sounding the alarm bells. I am sure that members remember the former attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould, who was actually indigenous. Here is what she had to say: "A Prime Minister committed to true reconciliation would have removed [the minister] from Cabinet long ago. Instead we get to watch white people play ancestry wheel of fortune." The Prime Minister fired his first indigenous attorney general but kept the fake-indigenous employment minister. Just as Jody Wilson-Raybould said, it is extremely "shameful and extremely destructive".

It is extremely shameful and destructive that we still stand here, day after day, month after month, with exactly the same demand for the Liberals' accountability to Parliament, to Canadians and to every single taxpayer. They should know exactly where that \$400 million went, which friends were enriched and what happened in the 186 conflicts of interest that are still at the Liberals' feet. Day after day, we will demand this again.

• (1125)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as all Canadians did, I sat there on Friday night and saw what was going on in my hometown of Montreal. I was absolutely disgusted by the display of a lawless mob that was destroying such a beautiful city. In fact, it is happening right across the country, and it is escalating. Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned about this escalation.

What would my hon. colleague say we should do about it?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the very basic thing that any government can do about this is to signal that it is wrong, but we cannot expect even that from the current government. The Prime Minister danced the night away and waited until noon the

next day to say anything about the lawless behaviour in his own city. The very start of this should be at least a condemnation and should be to make sure that these rioters face the full extent of the law. They are not peaceful protesters. There is a very clear line between protest in this country and lawless mob behaviour, and that line was crossed on Friday night and on many other weekends in this country, when people feel unsafe in their own communities. There is terrorist cosplay; flags of terrorist organizations are flying in neighbourhoods where Jewish communities live. Any government would say that is unacceptable, but leadership would say that it is absolutely unacceptable and that those people should be arrested.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has also condemned the acts of violence that occurred during Friday's protests. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the Bloc Québécois's bill that seeks to do away with the religious exemption for hate speech. For example, criminal charges cannot be laid if religious-based incitement to hatred or hate speech occurs as part of a protest like the one we saw.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the member is not going to like what I say about this, but we have been entirely consistent that the solution to bad speech is not necessarily to stop speech. That is what we have seen from the Liberals with Bill C-11, Bill C-63 and, to some extent, Bill C-18. The solution is both more speech and having the consequences in place to actually arrest people who break the law. There are plenty of laws that currently exist in our Criminal Code that have been broken time after time and that would create more civil rest in this country rather than the unrest, the rioting and the behaviour that we have been seeing in the streets. I do not think the solution is stopping Canadians from having their point of view; it is stopping the lawbreakers from breaking the law.

• (1130)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are here for specifically is the privilege motion, as she spoke about, and how it involved a minister who has since stepped down. However, the green slush fund, the whole scandal and the redacted documents involve another sitting minister, the Minister of Environment, who is still part of cabinet and the Prime Minister's close inner circle.

The member just gave a great speech. Canadians are wondering why this gridlock in Parliament has been occurring for the last couple of months. It is very serious; we have sitting members of the cabinet, of the government, still sitting in their chairs and making decisions on behalf of Canadians. How important is it that we finally get to see these unredacted documents and really get to the bottom of this problem?

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Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, it is important that any Canadian and any taxpayer sees where their tax money is going, which is exactly what this Parliament and what an opposition is here to do. It is very important that the government complies with an order that the Speaker made to the House, which is to turn over those documents to police to see if there is any wrongdoing.

Let us go back for a second. The Prime Minister cannot possibly say anything to his ministers who have violated ethics rules as he himself has broken ethics rules. Members of his cabinet who still sit in his cabinet are found to have broken the ethics law, a number of ministers, some who have hired their best friends and others who have hired friends of family. Of course, there is a culture of corruption within the cabinet. It does not start with the minister who stepped down, and it does not end with the environment minister, but it starts with the Prime Minister. The reason he cannot tell anybody they are doing anything wrong is that he has been in the wrong so many times.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member would comment further on the explosion of hate that is happening in this country, particularly directed at the Jewish community, with the open display of terrorist symbols and the lack of action or condemnation from the Liberal government. We are seeing unprecedented hatred directed toward the Jewish community in our country, and the response from the government has been absolutely abysmal.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about this many times in the House. The reason I have spoken about it so many times is that it is not only the people I represent in Thornhill but communities right across the country who are reaching out in hopes that somebody is listening to their plight.

There have been firebombings into businesses, gunshots into schools and riots on a weekly basis in cities across the country. People have been made to feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods. Instead of even the weakest condemnation, it is actually worse; government members have inflamed it with their rhetoric. We have the member for York Centre, a minister of this Crown, who held hands with a literal terrorist, a man who is in the 19th year of his four-year term and has a martyr's fund that rewards terrorists for killing people who fight from her own riding. We have a pretend envoy on issues of anti-Semitism who speaks out against the Prime Minister and says all the right things in the community but does not have a seat at the table and is, frankly, ignored.

The community looks at the government and wonders, "What the heck happened?" This used to be a government that stood for moral clarity, on the right side of history and to protect a community, but this government is nowhere to be found. It is a shame for everybody who is watching, and not only the Jewish community but every freedom-loving, law-abiding Canadian who sees this.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our Conservative deputy leader, the member for Thornhill, for an excellent summary of the corruption, the lack of accountability, the violation of people's charter rights, etc. I know that when common-sense Conservatives become government, we have a plan that is going to stop the crime on our streets and address some of the lack of accountability. Could the member elaborate on that plan?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, we see chaos all over the country; one sees it no matter where one is, where one lives or in what city. There are two million people eating from a food bank; the price of a home has doubled; crime, chaos, drugs and disorder flow through our streets freely; and the government is nowhere to be found on any of these issues. In fact, the Liberals would rather hold up Parliament by refusing to hand over documents for two months when they see the crisis.

The Prime Minister has made admissions in the last month of the failure of his own agenda, be it on housing, immigration or food costs. The only thing left is that he has not said his carbon tax is an abject failure, but it is time now for him to make that admission on the carbon tax, scrap the carbon tax and call a carbon tax election so Canadians can get rid of these guys.

● (1135)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Thornhill, the deputy leader of our party, for her passionate statement today about what happened in Montreal on Friday night.

I recall that in the days after October 7, I went to the Am Shalom synagogue in south Barrie. I was there participating in a service that was directed by the rabbi, which involved many community members and community leaders. We could sense by their anguish over what happened on October 7 just how deeply and profoundly this terrorist attack by the terrorist organization Hamas had on the Jewish people I represent in Barrie—Innisfil. I remember making a speech to the congregation and telling them that as elected officials it was our responsibility to keep our community safe, not just the Jewish community but all communities across this country. There was concern about not just what happened but what potentially could happen in this country. For the better part of two years now, we have been seeing this play itself out on the streets.

I watched, like many Canadians did on Friday night, not necessarily on mainstream media, because there was not much coverage about what happened in Montreal on mainstream media, but on social media, this lawless mob trashing and destroying while intimidating Jewish Canadians. I, for one, as a member of Parliament and a Canadian citizen, was disgusted by what I saw in my hometown of Montreal. It was disgusting. Enough is enough. It is time for leadership. It is time for moral clarity. It is time to not have a leader who is feckless and timid in his approach, who says one thing to one group and says another thing to another group. I can tell my colleagues that many Canadians are feeling this way. They have seen what has gone on.

Privilege

Lawless mobs have been pervading our streets for the last two years. That escalated on Friday night in Montreal. We also saw it over the weekend in Toronto, where terrorist sympathizers were going to Jewish communities and taunting them right near their homes. We cannot stand for that. We should not stand for that. We need to do something about it. It is unbelievable that this is going on in this country. It is not just partisans on the right and partisans on the left who are saying this. There are always going to be partisans. Normal people are saying this now. They are saying enough is enough. They want a return to normalcy and decency in this country. That takes leadership.

Canada used to be a place where we allowed those who were persecuted to come into our country. Those who were persecuted for faith-based reasons, for their sexual orientation, for being from the wrong tribe or whatever used to come to this country to flee persecution. Now we are allowing the persecutors into this country. Those very people the persecuted were fleeing from are the people who have been allowed by the government into this country to do what they are doing to it right now, to create chaos, to intimidate and to bring the grievances of other nations to our nation. Instead of standing under one flag, the Canadian flag, they are standing under the flags of the grievances they brought to this country. That is wrong.

We are Canadian. We stand for what is right. We have moral values. We protect those who are vulnerable and keep them free from intimidation. This is pervading our streets right now and it has to stop. It is only going to stop when solid leadership with some moral clarity is shown in this country and the rule of law is applied equally in this country. This is a shame.

● (1140)

I am hearing from my community of Barrie—Innisfil. I was out all weekend and heard what is going on. I heard the concern among many people, not just Jewish Canadians but people from other backgrounds and Canadians who were born here, saying enough is enough. They want a return to normalcy and decency in this country and a change of government. In many people's views right now, the only way we are going to return to a sense of normalcy and decency is if we have a change of government, because the government has proven time after time that it is not concerned about doing the right thing. It is not concerned about protecting those who are facing fear and intimidation in our communities right across the country. The government's only concern is in protecting itself politically and making sure it does whatever it has to do to stay in power, no matter what the cost or how it impacts communities across this country, whether Jewish or other communities. It has to stop, and it cannot stop soon enough.

A lot of European and eastern bloc people tell me the same thing. As much as I am hearing from those who fled persecution about how we are allowing the persecutors into this country, eastern bloc people come to me all the time, wave their finger and say, "This happened in my country. It is why I left my country. Do not let what happened to my country happen in this country." What do they mean by that? It is a different perspective, but it is the rise of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, the incremental loss of rights and freedoms, and control of the media that many of these people fled to come to this country so they would never have to experience

it again in their lives and, better yet, so their children would never have to experience it. However, we are seeing it time and time again.

The corruption, the cronyism, all the same things that people fled from in eastern bloc countries, are pervading our institutions here in Canada. Enough is enough. It is time to return to a sense of morality, decency and normalcy in this country because Canadians have had it. Normal people have had it, too. When I say "normal", I mean people who do not pay much attention to politics. They go about their lives, trying to provide for their families, not just now but for future generations as well. They see everything that is going on. They see the lawless mobs on the street, the corruption, the debt and the deficit. They see the fact that their children, many of whom are 30 or 35, are unable to buy a house or afford rent and so still live in their basement. They see the cost of groceries. They see the cost of everything escalating, the necessities of life becoming unaffordable. Those normal people right now are saying something is not right. Something is wrong and they are feeling it.

Single moms are worried about mortgages that are due for renewal. There are a million mortgages due for renewal in this country in 2025, some as much as 30% to 40% more in renewal costs. How are people going to afford that? How are they going to afford to keep their homes? That is what is bothering single moms right now. That is what is bothering moms. If we start ripping that security blanket away from those families, we have a recipe for disaster in this country. Many of those normal people are rising up now and saying enough is enough.

They are looking at alternatives. They are looking at alternative governments that will make their lives more affordable, that will get homes built and fix the budget, the \$1.34 trillion in debt we have right now. More importantly, they are looking to alternative governments in this country to stop the crime and chaos in our communities, where violent crime, gun crime and extortion have skyrocketed. It was not like this in 2015. We did not see the type of criminal activity and drug crime happening across the country that we are seeing right now.

● (1145)

I say that normal people are rising up and are saying something is broken and something is not right, and they are right, because we have the statistics to prove it. We do not even need statistics; just look at the news. Every day in Toronto, there are shootings. Extortion, car thefts and drug overdoses are happening right across the country. What people want is a government that is going to allow for safer communities to happen.

The bail system is broken in this country; police associations right across the country are talking about it right now. They are compiling statistics, and I know they are going to come out with them soon, about the fact that the bail system is so broken in this country. It is so broken that officers who are on the front line, whose lives are in danger as a result of the broken bail system, know that if they arrest somebody in the morning for a serious offence, in all likelihood they are going to be out in the afternoon, allowed to walk the streets freely. That is what is concerning normal people right now.

I was at a Nigerian event on Saturday night. Friends of mine in the Nigerian Barrie—Innisfil community, and I spoke to many of them when I was there, said that crime is the number one issue of concern within their community. They came to Canada to flee from the situations they are now facing in this country. In many cases, the people who were persecuting are the ones who are here; the people who were doing the crime in other countries are here now doing the exact same thing in this country. It has to stop. Enough is enough.

I want to talk about the issue at hand, which is the SDTC scandal. It is my third time rising on it. We have been dealing with it for two months. The Speaker's order was to have the government send the documents unredacted. We know, for example, that 11,000 documents still exist within the justice department. We know from the parliamentary law clerk that they have not been submitted to Parliament at this point.

What is in the documents? What is it that the government is hiding that it would seize Parliament on the issue of privilege for so many months? There has to be a hell of a lot of information in there that the government is worried about.

The government needs to just release the documents. The stand-off can end tomorrow and we can get on with the business of the country. The Speaker ruled that the supremacy of Parliament was paramount and that the documents had to be turned over to Parliament, but they have not been up to this point.

This is not the first scandal there has been. SDTC is just the tip of the iceberg. If we go through a list of some of the scandals, there was the cash for access scandal. There was the SNC-Lavalin affair. I invite anybody to just search Google and pull up the Liberal scandals since 2015. There is a whole list of them.

There was the ArriveCAN scandal. There were the sole-source contracts; many sole-source contracts were issued throughout the course of the pandemic, and subsequently through the ArriveCAN app; we know there is \$90 million on that one. It could be much greater than the figure that the Auditor General has discussed. There is the WE Charity scandal, with \$900 million that was going to the Prime Minister's friends.

The former minister of international development gave a sole-source contract, breaching ethics violations and ethics contraventions, to her friend Amanda Alvaro. Also, the minister's sister-in-law was appointed as the interim ethics commissioner for just a few days. Of course, there have been other scandals, such as the Winnipeg lab scandal.

In each one of the scandals, the government has basically tied the hands of Parliament, and it has tried to cover up many of them, where many of the Liberals' insider-connected friends and cronies have enriched themselves as a result of sole-sourced contracts, other government contracts and the latest one, with \$400 million to the SDTC board. Board members contravened conflict of interest guidelines 183 times and enriched themselves with 400 million dollars' worth of contracts.

Privilege

• (1150)

It is absurd. It is almost laughable that the government is spending so much political capital trying to cover this up and trying not to give the information to Parliament that it rightly deserves. It is not laughable; it is actually sad that we are in this situation.

I want to go back to August 2020, at the height of the pandemic, when we started seeing a diminishment and decline in democracy. One of the first pieces of legislation that came out after the pandemic was to basically seize control of the spending power of this place, to give the Liberals, I think it was in Bill C-2, the opportunity to spend whatever they wanted on the pandemic without Parliament's approval.

Shortly after that, many sole-source contracts came in and were given to Liberal-connected insiders and cronies. In August 2020, I stood up and spoke about the situation going on. At that time, we had heard about Frank Baylis and the ventilator contract, which was \$300 million of sole-source contracts, and there were others.

I remember quoting Warren Kinsella, who is a former Liberal strategist who was chief of staff to former prime minister Jean Chrétien. Kinsella used a word that is in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, about what the government was all about. In fact he wrote an article entitled "When You Become What You Came to Change", in which he talked about the word "kleptocracy".

Kleptocracy is when the leaders of a nation use the availability of resources they have, either through the treasury or by other means, to not just enrich themselves but also to enrich those who are within their close, inner circle. In his article he said, "It's in the dictionary.... The Merriam-Webster people define it as 'government by those who seek chiefly status and personal gain at the expense of the governed.'"

It was important at that time, and I would argue that it is equally important at this time, because it is the reason why these types of scandals are so profoundly scandalous. The allegations are that insiders and connected insiders sought to enrich themselves during this very difficult period Canadians are going through: the cost of the necessities of life such as groceries, mortgages and all of the things Canadians are struggling with, not just cost of living but also housing attainability and affordability.

Nevertheless, well-connected insiders and cronies are using their relationships and their benefits to enrich themselves during these times. The problem, which Mr. Kinsella spoke about, and I would agree with him, is that the people who are governed are losing their home, their job and their future while the Prime Minister and his friends are taking off like bandits. They are enriching themselves.

I asked a question to the Commissioner of Lobbying at the ethics committee meeting just a couple of weeks ago. There has been an increase in lobbying and lobbyists, going from 7,000 early in the current government to now over 11,000 registered lobbyists, all of whom are coming to Ottawa with cap in hand, their hand out, trying to get as much money as they can for the people they represent, and many of them are very likely Liberal-connected.

Privilege

Kinsella also said, “That is not merely wrong, it is...evil. It is beyond the pale. Beyond words.” He said that there is a name for what we now have, a government like the Prime Minister's, run by people who seek status and personal gain while the rest of us and the rest of Canadians suffer so greatly, not just economically but also socially, through the division that has been created by the government. Kinsella said it is a kleptocracy, where connected insiders benefit from their role in government at the expense of the people it governs. It is precisely what is going on; we have a kleptocracy.

• (1155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, where does one start? There is so much misinformation compacted into 20 minutes, and it is echoed in the social media throughout the country by unethical characters. I will not say from which political party, but there are unethical characters who continue through social media to espouse all sorts of misinformation. First and foremost, let me assure the member that Canada is not broken. Canada, in comparison to any other country in the world is the best country to call home, whether the Conservative Party wants to believe that or not. That is up to them.

What we are supposed to be debating today is a Conservative motion that would have the issue go to the procedure and House affairs committee. That is the ruling of the Speaker. Conservatives can twist and bend it all they want, but that is the ruling. If we want to talk about cowardice and disclosure of information, just take a look at Stephen Harper and his parliamentary secretary, the current leader of the Conservative Party.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, if we want any evidence of just how difficult the situation is for Canadians, I think I pretty much addressed that in the course of my speech, but we just have to ask young people right now who have felt lied to and let down by the Prime Minister after he was elected in 2015. They do not just feel lied to or let down; they feel despondent right now because the hope of a better future has been lost in many ways because of the economic and social policies of the government.

Food bank use has increased to almost 3 million people a month. The good news is that it was not like this before 2015 and it will not be after the next election, which cannot come soon enough from my perspective and from the perspective of many Canadians.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to work alongside the hon. member at the ethics committee. In fact the issue came to the ethics committee, where there were some pretty significant revelations about the nature of the gaps in governance for SDTC, about the inside dealings and about the corruption of board members receiving government money while voting in on their own self-interest.

I know that the hon. member spent some time on city council, as did I, and would have likely some experience with procurement. New Democrats see these things happen. We have certainly dealt with enough scandals at committee. What would the member do to help close the loopholes on governance and procurement to ensure that this type of insider dealing cannot continue to happen?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, in many ways, the governance and the rules are already in place, either through the Conflict of In-

terest Act or through the conflict of interest laws that exist in this country. Primarily, it is the appointments. In the SDTC scandal, many of the appointments to the board of SDTC were made by the current Liberal government.

The problem is, as the hon. member noted, that many of the contracts were issued with the approval of the board, or worse yet, where those individuals who were part of the board did not recuse themselves from the decision-making process. The rules are in place and everybody knows the rules. As parliamentarians, we know the rules. The challenge and the problem is that the people who are put in those positions do not act with the same moral integrity, the same moral high ground, that should be acted upon when they are appointed to positions, and they do not subscribe to the rules that already exist.

• (1200)

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having been involved in riots in the past in my law enforcement career, I can say that what happened in Montreal is certainly an awakening call for Canadians and to how disruptive some of the protests are.

Getting back to SDTC, I wonder whether the member can answer the question as to why the government is reluctant to produce the unredacted documents. Is it because, first of all, only 60% of the files SDTC dealt with have been examined, or is it because the Liberals are just afraid somebody might end up going to jail?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are waking up, especially after what happened in Montreal, but they were aware of the situation of these lawless mobs taking over the streets. I was speaking to the Canadian Association of Retired Persons just a month ago, and the question of why this is happening in this country came up.

On the issue of SDTC, there are 11,000-plus documents that have not been submitted by the justice department to the parliamentary law clerk. I cannot imagine what is in there that would cause the justice department to not provide, as Parliament ordered, and as the Speaker supported, these documents to the parliamentary law clerk. I would love to see the email exchanges that went on between, for example, ISED and the justice department. I think there is a level of criminality and known corruption within those documents that the government does not want Parliament, the Speaker or all Canadians to have a look at because it is damning.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I asked another Conservative colleague a question earlier. I wanted to know what she thought about the Bloc Québécois's bill that seeks to do away with the religious exemption for hate speech. She responded that censorship is not going to solve the problem.

Does that mean that, under a Conservative government, hate speech will be allowed for everyone or will the Conservatives just continue to maintain the special exception for those who engage in religious-based hate speech?

Privilege

[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I am an advocate for free speech. We have laws in this country that address the issue of hate speech. If one crosses the line, they should expect to be visited by law enforcement.

I listened to the answer of the hon. member for Thornhill, and I agree with her. Are we going to get to a point, which we would through Bill C-63, but hopefully with a change in government we would not, when we would be starting to censor the freedom of speech of Canadians? I believe, and it is an ideological belief on my part, that free speech is paramount in our democracy. It is paramount in our democratic institutions. If we as a government are restricting that in any way, save and except for what constitutes hate speech as identified in the Criminal Code, then we are doing a disservice to not just our freedoms, but also our institutions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to highlight the word “hypocrisy”, members should read what the member across the way just said about freedom. While they are at it, they should read the CBC article that talks about what Conservative MPs from within their own caucus had to say. It states:

After two years of [the leader of the Conservative Party], many Conservative MPs say they are much less free now than they were before his arrival.

The man who promised during his leadership run to make Canada “the freest country in the world” maintains tight control over the actions of his caucus members.

The member talks about freedom, but in reality, his leader has said that it does not apply to Conservative members of Parliament. Does he not see any hypocrisy there?

• (1205)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, the source is the CBC. That is enough said.

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am reminded of the Greek myth of Midas, in which everything he touches turns to gold. He turned his daughter into a gold statue, and he was distraught. There was another part where he judged a music contest, and the gods did not like his choice, so his ears were turned into donkey ears. He had to run around like that. However, for the things he had turned to gold, he was ultimately able to unwind what had happened by washing his hands of it.

Therefore, my question for the member is this: Is there a way for the government to unwind this scandal and the money it has spent?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I do not think there is. The proof of that is the government's reluctance to provide the documents to Parliament. What is in those documents that is so damning and could cause potential damage to the government?

I will tell members what my big fear is. I understand that we have laws to protect information in this country. When we do change government, which is coming, although we do not know when, but hopefully sooner than later, then we will be able to get to the bottom of all of these scandals and have access to all of these documents.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, normally when I rise in the House to speak, I say I am pleased to rise today. However, I must say I am super sad to rise today in the

House. I am super sad about the state of our nation. I cannot believe what happened in Montreal on Friday night and the state of events.

For those who are watching the debate today, we are still here, two months down the road, talking about the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, which was \$400 million of taxpayer money that ended up going to insiders who gave the money to their own companies. The Auditor General said there were 186 conflicts of interest. The whistle-blowers within the department itself said there was criminality involved.

Parliamentarians did their due diligence. It was the will of the House, with a majority vote, to have all the documents associated with this sordid affair produced and sent to the RCMP. The Liberals did what they always do. They redacted the good parts of the documents that were produced and did not produce the other half of them. Here we are, and the Speaker has ruled that no other government business will take place until this question of privilege is addressed and those documents are produced and sent to the RCMP.

My theme today is that this all comes back to the problem of the Liberals not having any regard for the rule of law in this country. Canada is built on the rule of law. It is what makes us a civilized society. We have seen, from the time the Liberals were elected in 2015, a lack of respect for the law and a continual erosion of the rule of law in Canada. Let me spend a few minutes talking about that.

In 2015, the Liberals were elected and they first brought forward Bill C-83, which forced judges, when considering bail, to put the least restrictive measures on an individual to reduce it to the easiest bail. That was the beginning of what has become catch and release in this country.

In 2017, the Prime Minister went to billionaire island, which was \$215,000 of taxpayer fraud. The RCMP ended up not investigating it, but at the end of the day, that sets the expectation of what kind of respect for the rule of law we should have. If the Prime Minister does not have any, then we can see that that lack of respect would go through the whole lot.

In 2019, Bill C-75 was brought forward by the government. In that bill, the government removed a lot of the mandatory minimums and set sentencing to be either a fine or a summary conviction of up to two years. Again, that diluted the rule of law in this country. Many of the things on the list were egregious, such as kidnapping and some terrorism offences. There were a whole list of things that the government reduced to a fine or a summary conviction of less than two years, which is a slap on the wrist.

Privilege

In 2022, the Liberals brought in Bill C-5. This was something that has led to further erosion of the rule of law. I want to read a couple of things just so people can understand the impact of all of this. Many of the comments were made by my friend, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who himself was a very experienced prosecutor when he came to this place. He said, when it comes to the different rules that were introduced, there were some that did not help. When former justice minister, David Lametti, introduced Bill C-5 in November of 2022, he described it as giving those who made small mistakes a second chance at life. The bill was really about eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for second and third convictions of serious gun and drug crimes.

We see that this continual erosion of the rule of law has led us to where we are today with the green slush fund. We know that the whistle-blower said there was criminality, and we see a number of subsection 119(1) violations. For those who do not know what that part of the law is about, subsection 119(1) says that no holder of public office can take an action that benefits themselves or their family.

● (1210)

We can see numerous issues with the green slush fund when people took these actions. Some of them were at the cabinet table. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change took an action as a cabinet minister to approve money, from the \$400 million that was in the slush fund, to go to Cycle Capital, which he owns 270 million dollars' worth of. That company tripled its value, and that is a direct benefit to him. I will allow the RCMP to do its good work investigating.

We saw a similar problem with the WE Charity scandal when the Prime Minister was taking an action that benefited his mother, his brother and his wife. Now we see in the “other Randy” scandal that, while at the cabinet table, the former minister took an action to give money to a company that he was a 50% shareholder in. I see that the police are investigating that, and I expect them to come to the conclusion that any reasonable individual would come to.

As such, the introduction of all of these laws to chip away at the rule of law to allow criminals to go back on the streets has an impact, and I want to talk about what that impact is. Since the time these Liberals took power in 2015, homicide is up 33%; auto theft is up 39%; theft over \$5,000 is up 49%; identity theft is up 121%; child sexual abuse is up 141%; human trafficking is up 210%; extortion is up 429%; child pornography is up 565%; and sexual assault is up 75%.

There is an impact when we remove the rule of law and the consequences that are put in place to disincentivize criminals from repeat offending. Many Order Paper questions have been asked to find out what is happening with catch and release and giving the least restrictive bail. It is said that one-third of homicides committed in Canada are committed by somebody who is out on bail for a previous violent offence. I want to speak to some of the human cost to that.

There was a shootout in Toronto, and of the 23 suspects collared, according to the sources, one was wanted for an unsolved murder and four were free on bail conditions.

Here is another one: A gentleman was facing an attempted murder and gun charge and allowed out with an ankle monitor, which he cut off. Durham Radio News reports:

They say the man was ordered to wear a GPS ankle monitor after being let out on bail in September 2023 while his case was before the courts, but he cut it off and fled.

[He] is currently before the courts for:

two counts of Attempt to Commit Murder Using a Restricted Firearm...

Careless Use of Firearm

Possession of Weapon for a Dangerous Purpose

Unauthorized Possession of a Firearm

Unauthorized Possession of a Weapon

Knowledge of Unauthorized Possession of a Firearm

Possession Prohibited or Restricted Firearm with Ammunition

Use Firearm While Committing Offence

two counts of Possession of Schedule 1 Substance for the Purpose of Trafficking

Who thought it was a good idea to let a guy like this out with an ankle bracelet?

Similarly, there is a 36-year-old Montreal man who was let out on bail after allegedly uttering death threats against his partner. He is now accused of murdering her on the south shore.

Here is another one from CTV News:

Authorities have issued a public warning after a 19-year-old man facing multiple criminal charges, including two counts of sexual assault, was released on bail in Vancouver.

In a news release, the Vancouver Police Department said Bryce Michael Flores-Bebington poses a “risk of significant harm to public safety in relation to alleged unprovoked physical and sexual violence against strangers.”

This guy is a danger to the public and they had to issue a warning to the public about him. Who thought it was a good idea to let this person out on bail?

It was not a good idea, but the Prime Minister and the Liberal government has continued to allow criminals off to reoffend. Let us look at some of the most heinous examples, starting with Paul Bernardo.

● (1215)

I am from St. Catharines. I was born there. I went to school with Kristen French's brother Brian. I lived a block and a half from where they lived, and I walked the same street where Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy were taken every single day of the five years I was in high school. I followed this case, and it was disgusting what was done to these girls and the many other victims. He deserved to be in maximum-security prison but, under the Liberals, they put him in minimum security, where there is hockey and tennis. I am sure that he is having a much better time there. When he comes up for his parole hearing, they will not even allow the victim's family to attend. That is what the Liberal government has done to the rule of law in Canada.

Privilege

Let me give another example. Let us talk about Terri-Lynne McClintic and Michael Rafferty. These two sickos took an eight-year-old Tori Stafford and they sexually assaulted her and murdered her. They are child killers. Yes, they were in maximum security until eventually Terri-Lynne McClintic was let out into a minimum-security healing lodge. It was not until the Conservatives found out and made a big stink about it that they put her back into a more secure prison. As soon as our back was turned, where did she go? She is now in a townhouse in a minimum-security facility next door to a mothers-with-children program. Members have heard that right. Terri-Lynne McClintic has access to children while in prison, and she is a child killer.

This is the undermining of the rule of law that the Liberal government has done. It is totally unacceptable and we see the results on our streets. For over a year, we have seen pro-Palestinian, pro-Hamas illegal protests blocking roads, calling death to Jews and death to Canada, and burning our flag. All the while, what is being done from an enforcement point of view? Nothing has been done. There have been very few arrests. There was an incident in Montreal with thousands of people rioting, and there were three arrests. They will probably be out on bail before we know it. It is an undermining of the rule of law. It is also letting people into the country who are criminals and terrorists.

It has been admitted by the immigration minister that there was a period of time where, because of the backlog, they stopped doing security checks on people who were coming into the country. We have seen how that goes. They also decided to let 3,000 Gazans in when none of the other countries around would take them because of concerns about their links to Hamas, which is a designated terrorist organization. Canada brought them in. We have seen ISIS terrorists who were brought in through our immigration program.

This lack of respect for the rule of law extends to other departments that are inviting chaos into the country. When people want to become Canadian citizens, there are three things that they have to promise to do. The first is to obey the rule of law in Canada. It is one of the things that is part of any visa that we come to the country on, such as a tourist visa or work permit. Every one of these illegal protesters should be charged if they are Canadian citizens. Their files should be flagged if they are permanent residents so that they cannot become Canadian citizens, because they are not upholding the rule of law in Canada. They are part of the problem and not part of the solution.

I am sure our neighbours across the aisle here will decide that I am a racist. I am not a racist but I am about the rule of law applying equally to all. If I get up and I block a road, I know that they are going to arrest me in a New York minute. If I commit a crime, I am going to get arrested, but that does not seem to be what is happening.

In Toronto, there was a protest. Protesters were calling death to Jews. They were harassing them in their own neighbourhood. One of the Jewish women went to the police and said to arrest these people. The police said that there was nothing they could do. What is the point of having laws if we do not enforce them? The federal government puts the rule of law in place. The federal government has a responsibility. If the rule of law is not being enforced by the

police, it can be escalated to the RCMP. The military can be brought in.

We know, in the peaceful protest of the freedom convoy, that Liberals decided to declare the emergency measures act, which was deemed illegal because it did not meet the threshold.

What is the threshold? There has to be violence taking place across the country. We can check that box. There has to be proof that there is foreign interference. There has been a lot of proof about the Iranians backing up the pro-Palestinian protests, so we can check the box there.

• (1220)

It has to be beyond the resources of the police and the existing lots, so I would argue that maybe it is time to revisit that whole one. Of course, right now, even though it was declared illegal, not a single one of the individuals who voted for it is seeing any consequence at all while they appeal the process, whereas I, if I committed a crime, could appeal from prison. Again, that is not acceptable.

Now we know that the reason that the government will not produce the documents is that there is criminality; there is something to hide there. It is not the first time. We have seen this pattern of behaviour before. We saw it with respect to the Winnipeg lab documents, where what was being hidden was the fact that we were complicit with the Chinese military in providing it with viruses to work on developing bio-weapons. What did the Liberals do to keep that from coming forward? Well, first of all, it was the usual: They redacted the documents, claimed national security, and did not give anything. Then, they sued the Speaker of the House to keep the Liberals from coming forward with these documents. It has dragged out for years and we may be here for years, holding them to account on this slush fund.

We saw it as well with respect to the WE Charity scandal. Clearly, there was something going on there that would have been a violation if the evidence came forward, but the Liberals claimed cabinet confidence and all of these kinds of things. When it got hot, they decided to prorogue and call an election so that they could go back to square one. It is a pattern of behaviour of not only undermining the rule of law in this country, but of obstructing when we are trying to get to the bottom and find criminality. That, again, is not a surprise to me when I look over there from the Prime Minister on down to his cabinet ministers and to many other individuals who have been in the Liberal government here during my term. Since 2015, we had Joe Peschisolido, whose law firm was accused of money laundering; Raj Grewal, charged with fraud; and multiple RCMP and police investigations that continue to go on today. We have the minister from Edmonton who is under investigation by the police and there are a number of fraud suits against the company that he was involved in. Therefore, it is not a surprise, but it is unacceptable.

Privilege

The good news is that it was not like this before the Prime Minister arrived with the Liberals who are corrupt and it will not be like that when we get rid of them. We common-sense Conservatives would come with a plan to stop the crime. We would stop the gun crime by upping the security at our borders to keep out the smuggling of illegal guns that the police associations are saying is 85% of the gun crime. We would bring down the number of car thefts by doing more scanning at the ports. We have plans that would get the hard drugs off our streets and it would be jail, not bail, for repeat violent offenders. That is what we need in this country. We have good laws, but we have to start enforcing them. We cannot keep reinforcing to criminals that they can commit a crime without any consequences at all, which is essentially what happens when they commit a crime and are out again in the afternoon to commit another crime. We have all heard the statistics about the 6,000 crimes that were committed in Vancouver in one year by 40 individuals. I would argue that to take those 40 individuals off the streets, away from where they are damaging the public, is the wiser way, the common-sense way and it is something that we would do.

Again today, I call on the government to produce the papers and give them to the RCMP. It is the right thing to do. It is the way we would uphold the rule of law and not be secretive and not try to hide wrongdoing. If we do not do that, we will continue to be here on this side of the House speaking out against corruption and a lack of accountability in the Liberal government. We will make sure that when we become government, we restore accountability, restore the rule of law, and uphold and enforce the rule of law.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two quick points.

We heard a fairly significant rant about crime, as if under Conservative regimes no crime exists in Canada. Nothing could be further from the truth. We all know that, in fact, one of the individuals whom the member was making reference to, McClintic, was reclassified to medium security in 2014, when Stephen Harper was Prime Minister.

When we talk about contempt of Parliament, all one needs to know is that the leader of the Conservative Party today was the parliamentary secretary to Stephen Harper, the only prime minister in the entire British Commonwealth held in contempt of Parliament. One of the reasons was that he was not providing information to the Parliament of Canada.

With respect to the point that the Conservatives feel that they have this right, yes, they have unfettered rights, but they also are in borderline contempt of Parliament. Giving the documents directly to the RCMP is something that the RCMP does not want and that the Auditor General of Canada and other legal experts have said that we should not be doing, but the Conservatives say we should listen to the Conservative Party. Gee whiz, how tough a decision is that?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, members will notice exactly what is happening here. I am bringing up direct issues that are related to what is happening today, and the Liberals are diverting by talking about what happened in 2014, and what happened way be-

fore. My mother used to say that we cannot change the past, we can only change the future. That is why we are calling on the government to produce the papers, to start being accountable and to start enforcing the rule of law in our country.

The RCMP gets tips all the time from Crime Stoppers, letters dropped off and calls on alleging criminal activity. It is their due diligence to follow up on those. We know the whistle-blower said there was criminality. We know there is criminality. That is why the Liberals are not producing the documents. I invite them to prove me wrong. Let them produce the documents.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things I was concerned about in the past was when Stephen Harper cut the CBSA by over 1,000 staff, including the teams that actually used to do joint operations with the FBI, U.S. Border Patrol and so forth. The reason I raise it as relevant is that we are short at least two training tranches and upwards of 2,000 to 3,000 CBSA officers on the border right now.

Perhaps the member could provide some information about how this has affected our border capabilities, especially when we lost the embedded teams on that particular file.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, this question allows me to say, once again, we are diverting back to the past. Let us look at what our Leader of the Opposition has said he will do when he becomes prime minister.

He will increase the resources at the border to protect our border security, to detect illegal weapons and drugs coming in, and to scan the containers that are taking stolen vehicles overseas. He has been clear that the U.S. is concerned about the security of our border and about our lackadaisical job on security clearance on immigration.

We will take care of that when Conservatives are in government. Call a carbon tax election. Let us get it done now.

• (1230)

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for her great words in that very informative speech.

At the heart of this situation is a tremendous scandal of the SDTC issue, and the \$400 million that has gone missing. The Auditor General has confirmed that.

In my riding of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, the biggest two concerns right now are the economy and crime. I would like to know if the member has any ideas on how this \$400 million could go towards helping people in the economy right now and towards fighting crime, the two biggest issues in my area.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, in my riding, the food bank is running out of food regularly, and I know that is happening across the country because people can simply not afford to eat. Twenty-five per cent of children are going hungry. One in five family members are eating less because they cannot afford to eat. Scurvy has returned.

That \$400 million would do a lot to feed the hungry here in Canada. We are spending money overseas like drunken sailors, but here in Canada, we have people who are suffering, and that money could have gone to them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by saying that I agree with that member. What happened in Montreal is absolutely disgusting, and we all need to stand against that. Peaceful, legal protest is completely in order. When it is not legal, then it is not in order.

I must admit, I was a little taken aback. I was working away here, I heard her say something, and I had to stop to get my staff to go back, review the tape and get me the quote. She said, “I am about the rule of law applying equally to all. If I get up and I block a road, I know that they are going to arrest me in a New York minute.”

She was talking about what was going on in Montreal. I do not ever remember her saying that when people were blocking the roads out front for three weeks during the convoy protest. As a matter of fact, according to CTV, and I just looked it up, when she was a leadership candidate, she was out there taking selfies with them.

Can the member explain to this House the hypocrisy or the double standard? The member is all about arresting people when they block the roads, except if they are people that she wants to take selfies with in front of Parliament?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member listened to my speech, or at least part of it. That is a good thing. Maybe he missed the many public statements I made during the “freedom convoy” when I said protesters were illegally blocking the roads and it was not acceptable. The rest of it was peaceful, but that was not acceptable. When they blocked the bridges in Sarnia—Lambton, members will find me on the public record saying exactly the same thing. The rule of law has to apply equally to all.

I noticed all kinds of enforcement with the “freedom convoy”, but I do not see that same enforcement with the pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague said the government is spending like a drunken sailor, but I wonder if she wants to apologize to sailors, who, of course, spend their own money.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, my colleague is right. I apologize to sailors and military people, who have to buy their own boots and supplies while the government fills its Liberal insider friends' pockets with millions and millions of dollars, from Frank Baylis and the \$172 million for ventilators we never used, to the Minister of International Trade. I could go on and on. I apologize—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. deputy government House leader.

Privilege

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I cannot let this one go, Madam Speaker. Moments ago, the member said she called on the convoy to not block the streets, but she had a post on Facebook on January 31, 2022, where she said, “Meeting with hard working truckers in Ottawa!” A story in a Lambton newspaper says she told the Prime Minister to sit down with these people and talk to them.

I cannot find a single comment online about her telling people they should not be blocking the streets. I can find tons of pictures of her taking selfies with protesters and eating dinner with them, but I cannot find a single comment that she claims she made. Can she tell me where I might be able to locate these comments?

● (1235)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I am surprised the member is not able to find them, because I certainly ranted quite a bit, especially about the Prime Minister's comments on the protesters. He called them a “fringe minority” with “unacceptable views” that should not be tolerated. I think that is what he said. I certainly spoke up about that at the time.

Once again, we see what the Liberals are doing. They are distracting. They want to go back. They do not want to talk about why they are not producing the documents or the scandals and corruption going on today. They want to distract.

It is not going to work. Canadians are aware. They are watching and suffering. We need a carbon tax election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I ask for unanimous consent to table a picture of the member wining and dining the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is such a pleasure to be here yet again to speak about the government's unwillingness to turn over documents. It is a bit like *Groundhog Day*. What a wonderful movie that was with Bill Murray. There is a good quote in that movie: “You wanna throw up here, or you wanna throw up in the car?” The person answers, “I think...both.” Maybe that is what Canadians are feeling while watching this debate go on and on because the government refuses to release documents that we all know Parliament has an ability to get.

Privilege

I would like to start off with a couple of quotes. The last time Parliament was seized with a document production order from a previous government, Michael Ignatieff, then the leader of the Liberal Party, said, "Its refusal to get to the truth is costing us our credibility as a nation". I will skip a quote by Mr. Ujjal Dosanjh, as it is too long. Mr. Bryon Wilfert said, "in fact, the supremacy of Parliament dominates". This is not something written on the back of an envelope. Parliament has unfettered access to these documents. Mr. Shawn Murphy, a Liberal from Charlottetown, stated, "the law is very clear that Parliament has the unfettered right to seek the production of persons, papers and records". Mr. Jack Harris, a New Democrat, said, "the supremacy of Parliament is incontestable" and "the power of Parliament is predominant and overrides that."

We have been here before. We have discussed Parliament's ability to get documents. In that circumstance, there was a willingness on behalf of the government to find a solution that would enable Parliament to keep functioning while complying with the order to turn over documents. In that case, it was for a matter of national security, which was how the special committee on defence was born. It was to provide parliamentarians with an ability to see documents that they had a right to access and read so they could get back to the business of the House. The government has not offered any compromise on how it wants to get back to the business of Parliament.

What is it we want to get back to? We have to spend a moment talking about the last-ditch cheque-writing scheme the government announced last week. It is all about control for the Prime Minister. He wants to control what we see online. He wants to control other aspects of our lives. Guess what. He is going to give us a tax break, but only if we spend it on the things he allows us to spend it on. For someone who wants to buy a 6.9% beer, there is no problem, but heaven forbid if it is a 7.1% beer. That is not covered. Time and time again, the Prime Minister has shown a penchant for wanting to control Canadians.

However, let us get back to the documents. As we have talked about, Parliament has the unfettered ability to access documents, but the government seems to have a problem with conflicts of interest. It also seems to have a problem with producing documents. Do members remember the WE Charity scandal and the Winnipeg lab documents? Do they remember the beginning of COVID when the government tried to suspend Parliament and give itself unlimited taxing and spending powers without the oversight of Parliament?

It has clearly shown a disdain for what happens in this place. Ministers routinely ignore invitations to committees. The Liberals routinely ignore orders to produce documents. They even took the Speaker to court.

● (1240)

On foreign interference, they did not want to do anything, which is very interesting, because the party that has had absolute information asymmetry through this entire affair, the party that knows everything about foreign interference there is to know, is the one that said all along that we did not need to do anything. We did not need an inquiry. Former governor general David Johnston would launder their reputation with his good reputation, and everything would be okay. It turned out there was something there, but the Liberals tried

telling Canadians all along that there was nothing to see. They did not want to expose the truth.

The fact that the RCMP wrote a letter saying that in its investigation it may not be able to rely on documents that it receives is fair enough. The order does not require the government to send the documents to the RCMP. The order requires the government to send the documents to the law clerk, and the law clerk is supposed to send the documents to the RCMP. The RCMP is well within its rights to not look at them. It is well within its rights to not rely on them for an investigation. As a member of Parliament, if I get those documents, I will post them on the Internet, and the RCMP can look at them if they like. However, the government has not even offered a compromise on how it wants to deal with this.

Let us talk about the legal advice the government is getting. The government is getting legal advice from the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice is advising, as I am sure is likely the case, the industry minister, the industry department, the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's Office. That same Department of Justice is also advising the RCMP. That sounds like a conflict of interest.

It would be very convenient for the RCMP to write a letter that says it does not want the documents, as they could put privacy rights of Canadians at risk. That is really convenient given the same lawyers advising the RCMP are advising Industry Canada. One has to wonder about the conflicts of interest going on in the current case within the government apparatus at the Department of Justice, which has two clients with potentially divergent interests.

One might think we would want to take into consideration this conflict of interest, but it is not the first time that conflicts of interest seem to escape members of Parliament on the other side. Need I remind the House about the Aga Khan trip to a billionaire's island, or the friends who were not found to be friends as it relates to receiving gifts?

The Auditor General singled out that \$400 million of taxpayer money went to ineligible recipients and specifically counted 186 cases of specific conflicts of interest where a board member was found to be benefiting through a company in which they had a financial interest. That, in and of itself, should be cause for Parliament to shut down and have an election. The fact that \$400 million of this fund went to people who should not have gotten it tells us all we need to know about the government.

Since we are going back in time, as my hon. colleagues like to do, I want to read some quotes from the hon. Scott Brison. In 1999, Mr. Brison said to the Toronto Star, "Nothing starts a feeding frenzy more than the smell of cash around Liberal backbenchers." In Hansard in 1998, he said, "The biggest obstacle that stands between Canadians and the attainment of their goals is the Liberal government." This is what is happening.

Privilege

● (1245)

Canadians just want to live their lives. They pay their taxes, they want to do the right thing and then they find out that the government, because it is completely inept and negligent, not only allows money to go to ineligible recipients, but appoints people who have an inherent conflict of interest to a board that disburses money to those it knows. If it were not for the whistle-blower in this case, we would not have known that at the beginning of these board appointments, the conflicts of interest these board members potentially would be in was raised as an objection by ministerial staff, by departmental staff. They were saying that the individuals the government wanted to appoint to the board would be in conflicts of interest and would make it hard for them to discharge their duties. The warning was very clear. What happened? These individuals could not help themselves but be tempted to favour their own companies.

We should be seized with this situation, as we rightfully are in the House. Our parliamentary system works on parliamentary supremacy. The fact is that we asked for these documents as a Parliament, with the support of the majority of members of the House, and we should be able to see those documents. If the government is very concerned about what is in them, for reasons I am not sure of, because it certainly is not national security as it was in previous times, then it could at least offer a compromise on how we could solve this situation.

I have another proposal for my friends. The Liberals can either give us the documents, or they can get the \$400 million back. If they get the \$400 million back, then I would be willing to expeditiously move back to the work of the people. However, frankly, this is the work of the people. They expect us to come to Ottawa and find out what is happening with their money.

I have been driving around this town for the greater part of three years, and I still have not found the money tree that the government seems to think exists. Have members seen the money tree yet? I would love to find it. However, the Liberals treat hundreds of millions of dollars with such nonchalance—

Mr. Ed Fast: Cavalier.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, it is very cavalier. The hon. member for Abbotsford is a great member.

I think it is time for accountability. If the Liberals do not want to get the \$400 million back, then maybe they should have some ministerial accountability for this situation. What would that look like?

It is true that a former minister was the minister in place when these individuals were appointed to the board, but the current minister was made well aware of the improprieties and conflicts of interest while he was in the chair.

I quite enjoy the Minister of Industry's enthusiasm and the flair that he brings to this place, but he was made aware of these improprieties and left those people on the board. Not only that, he recommended that one of the biggest offenders get a promotion. Ms. Andrée-Lise Méthot was promoted from the SDTC board to the board of the Infrastructure Bank. When her appointment was made, there were rumblings that there were problems at SDTC, and yet the government still believed it was appropriate to give that person a pro-

motion. For the life of me, I cannot understand why there is no ministerial accountability pretty much for anything that happens on that side of the House.

● (1250)

Here is the way it works. When there is a problem, someone will stand in the House of Commons and say that it is unacceptable. The minister responsible will then say that, as minister, they will find out what has happened and then sit down. Ministers are not thinking that, as ministers, they are responsible for what happens in their departments. Worse, when they do know that something has happened, they should take action.

As the Auditor General found, it turned out that \$400 million went to the wrong people. Gee whiz, as the parliamentary secretary likes to say, does the government not think there should be some accountability for that? We would think so when we are talking about that kind of money. Has the government even identified any individual who has been reprimanded or lost their job? Has it even attempted to recover the funds? Has it actually had any of the funds repaid? Is the government willing to compromise on this motion and present some other options in order for us to get back to the business of the day that it so desperately wants to get back to? No, it has not done any of that, because it has such a disrespect for Parliament.

There has been absolutely no contrition. A member of the government has not stood to say that not only did it make a mistake, but that it did not act fast enough and that it would do everything in its power to get the \$400 million back. This is a government that is now thumbing its nose at the Auditor General for the second time.

I need to remind the House that for basically the first time in a very long time, the CRA was given very poor marks for the auditing of CERB and wage subsidy benefits. The CRA specifically said that it did not accept the Auditor General's findings. That has rarely happened in the history of Parliament. The CRA did not pay any seemingly big price for that, so what does it do now?

The Auditor General says there were \$400 million, which have not gone missing since we know where they are, that went to the wrong people. The government says that it is no big deal, that it will not try to get it back. The Auditor General could not have been more clear about the conflicts of interest that exist, actual conflicts of interest, not just perceived ones. The legal test is that they are one and the same, but at least in this case, they were bona fide actual conflicts of interest.

The government could get the money back. It could propose some alternatives for us to get past this impasse. However, I view this as the job of the nation, the work of the nation to find out where this money is, to get it back and to have some accountability.

Privilege

The Liberal government likes to talk about the expense scandals of senators and Mike Duffy. Let me remind the House one more time that this was the only scandal in Canadian history where the taxpayer was paid back. The big scandal was that Mr. Duffy's expenses, which were incorrect and wrong, were paid back. The scandal was that the cheque was paid back to the taxpayer.

I can feel the palpable desire for my colleagues on the other side, my very great friends, to ask me questions. They might have checked the price of Bitcoin this morning and be a little upset about that. They cannot really stand up here and use their same old tropes.

I might not have an opportunity to do so later, so I want to wish you, Madam Speaker, a merry Christmas. I want to wish everyone in Simcoe North a very merry Christmas. To each and all of our families, *joyeux Noël*. Let us bring it home.

● (1255)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for the kind wishes, which I return.

Questions and comments, the hon. deputy House leader for the government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the member would like to avoid answering my question and talk about Bitcoin and what he perceives the Conservative policy to be around that, I would encourage him to do that.

On two occasions, the member said that there had never even been a compromise, that nobody even offered a compromise. The Speaker literally is telling us what the compromise is. The Speaker, through a ruling, has said to send this to PROC so that PROC can study it and figure out the best way to do this. It is as though he does not even know what is going on in here. The compromise is in the direction from the Speaker, yet the member has no concept of that. I do not think he knows that, because he just comes in here and goes on and on about how there is no compromise, but, literally, it is on the table.

Could he please tell us about Bitcoin?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, first, the compromise, as he promotes it to be a compromise, is not much of one. It is not even coming from the government. Why does it not give all the documents to PROC? That might be a compromise, but it is not even offering that. The way we got through this type of impasse in a previous parliament, under a previous administration, was the development of a special committee. There was a desire by the government of the day to avoid an election and a complete shutdown of Parliament.

The Liberals have not shown themselves to provide any amount of compromise on this issue. We should be getting the documents unredacted. The fact that the Chair is trying to broker a deal is okay, but that is not a compromise in my books.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I recall watching *The Muppet Show* and there were these two characters called Waldorf and Statler, who used to sit there and just launch insults at people. It is funny how it seemingly plays itself out here, too.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: What are you trying to imply?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I meant nothing. I am not looking at that member or the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

We have \$400 million that, in 183 circumstances, have been funnelled to board members of SDTC without seemingly following the Conflict of Interest Act. We know the Auditor General ruled on this.

Should this not go to the police rather than a committee, if criminal wrongdoing is at play here?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I have to remind my colleague that I am not the same vintage as him, but his reference to *The Muppet Show* I do get and I thought it was right on point. The fact that we have \$400 million missing means the RCMP should be investigating. It has confirmed it is looking at documents. If we have an ability to ensure it has all the information it needs to do its job properly, we should allow it to do so.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on someone who is an expert in dealing with the issue at hand, and that is Steven Chaplin, who is a former senior legal counsel in the office of the Law Clerk and the parliamentary counsel.

In a Hill Times article, he says, "It is time for the House of Commons to admit it was wrong, and to move on. There has now been three weeks", and now it would be much more than that, "of debate on a questionable matter of privilege based on", and I really want the member to listen to this part, "the misuse of the House' power to order producing documents."

There is no doubt we have unfettered power. It does not mean we should be using it in all situations. We should be listening to what the Auditor General of Canada is saying. We should be listening to what the RCMP is saying to parliamentarians. We should not be listening to the self-serving leader of the Conservative Party who is dictating to Conservative members as to what they have to say inside the House in order to be in the good books and get the gold star from the Conservative caucus.

When will members recognize that what they are actually doing is in borderline contempt of Parliament?

● (1300)

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, we cannot be in contempt of Parliament when the majority of the Parliament wants access to these documents. It is really nice that the member quotes *The Hill Times*, but how about thinking about the largest circulated publication, *The Globe and Mail*, that says that Parliament has an ability to get these documents, that it has a right to get these documents and that it should not stop until we get those documents? It is the business of the House to find out where \$400 million have gone. The parliamentary secretary says that we should not be using this power. For what purpose then would he want to use this power if not to find out what happened to \$400 million?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would once again remind our esteemed Conservative colleague that the police do not want those documents. They do not need them. However, the House has been paralyzed for over a month because the Conservatives want those documents to be released.

On another note, the NDP has indicated that it is prepared to support a 24-hour gag order to ensure that the government can pass the measures that it announced last Thursday. What does my colleague think about that?

[English]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I am unaware of a 24-hour gag order; I apologize.

However, what I would say to my hon. colleague with respect to the RCMP not wanting the documents is that it is up to the RCMP to not receive the documents. The government could provide the unredacted documents to members of Parliament first; we could then decide what to do with those documents. That would be a compromise, but that has not come out from this side of the House either.

If the RCMP does not want to look at the documents or thinks they could be a violation of privacy, that is for the RCMP to decide. It does not have to look at the documents if it does not want to.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my good colleague and bordering neighbour to the north from Simcoe North.

I would like to quote something very interesting that came from a whistle-blower in the testimony on SDTC. They said, “I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation from being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere.” That is quite a resounding quote.

What are the member's comments on this quote from the whistle-blower?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, that was a great question and a pointed quote from my great colleague, friend and neighbour.

Yes, the Liberals seem more interested in protecting themselves or their friends who might have been part of some criminal wrongdoing. Let us remind ourselves that they went out of their way to freeze the bank accounts of people they did not agree with. Why do we not freeze the bank accounts of the people who are on the board of SDTC until we get the \$400 million back?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the debate intently today, and it has been quite interesting to finally see Conservatives taking some responsibility. Today, the member for Barrie—Innisfil referred to what is happening in the House as a standoff. Per the definition, a “stand-off” is a “stalemate or deadlock between two equally matched opponents in a dispute or a conflict.”

Privilege

There is something really interesting about this place. I find the member to be honourable. I was a little disappointed that he would take cheap shots at the member for Winnipeg North in regard to a cabinet position. I think he is above that, but the Conservative contamination is clearly taking place. Even the good ones are having to fight for that gold star.

Does the member feel that the member for Barrie—Innisfil's comments are accurate and that the two are equally matched in their responsibility for the lack of progress taking place in this chamber in terms of fighting for the very good people we fight for?

I will just say something one more time because it is important: I fight for the good people of the riding of Waterloo. They are the reason I am here. They would like us to get to work, just as they are going to work. They know the Speaker's ruling. They are saying to call the question. Liberals agree we should get to the bottom of this. I think every party agrees with that. Right before the House went for—

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member time for a very short answer.

The hon. member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I think everyone in this place can handle a good-natured ribbing, and I think my friend on the parliamentary secretary's side is a great person.

I would just say that we are at a stalemate. We should find a compromise and move on. However, it starts with getting the documents, first and foremost.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is really interesting to be here debating this privilege motion, which first came to the House on September 26. Nearly two months ago, we first started having this conversation when the Speaker ruled on a matter of privilege and found that the privileges of the House had, in fact, been breached.

There was a point in time, many years ago, when I was studying political science as a very keen young student, that breaches of privilege were exceptionally rare. I remember going through the books and studying this when I was a brand new member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I read through the various rulings of different Speakers over the years, and it was something that was very uncommon. However, it seems that, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, there is a new privilege being breached just about every week. It seems that there is a new scandal every day. We are not talking about small scandals.

Privilege

One challenge Conservatives have is that we are not talking about a small amount of money; we are talking about nearly \$400 million that the Auditor General found was misspent by the NDP-Liberal government and that went to Liberal insiders. In fact, based on what the Auditor General was able to find, the green slush fund gave \$58 million to 10 projects that were ineligible and could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or the development of green technology. This is not a one-off. It is a pretty large amount, but according to the Liberals, there was nothing to see here. Then there was \$334 million and 186 cases of projects for which the board members themselves held conflicts of interest. Therefore, the people who were deciding where the money got spent decided to give \$334 million to themselves and their friends. Worse than that, there were some projects that were both ineligible and in conflict. That is a special kind of failure, to be able to do both at once. However, after nine years under the NDP-Liberals, it seems as though that is business as usual.

Canadians are struggling. One in four parents is skipping meals and going without food to make sure that their children have food. One in five children in this country is now living in poverty. We have the highest increase in child poverty that we have seen, with year over year increases, after nine years of these guys being in charge. Canadians are sitting there wondering when the end will be in sight.

The interesting piece is this: We have been sitting here for nearly two months debating why the government is so afraid of what will be found that it refuses to give the documents to the RCMP. We are not saying we need to tell the RCMP what to do with the documents; all that was decided was that government documents need to go to the RCMP. If it finds something wrong, it can then do something. The government is so afraid of the RCMP seeing these documents that it has stonewalled Parliament, ground this place to a virtual halt and prevented important pieces of legislation from going forward. This is all for the sake of protecting Liberal insiders. Members should let that sink in. Instead of giving over the documents, the government would rather that we have conversations and debates, day in and day out, for almost two months, on whether a privilege has been breached; we know it has because the Speaker, in fact, ruled that a breach took place.

The government is so afraid of the RCMP seeing these documents that it continues to filibuster this motion. In fact, the last time I got up to speak to this, I had the statistics for the number of words that had been spoken by the parliamentary secretary from Winnipeg, who cannot help himself. It seems that, at every opportunity, he gives another 20-minute speech and gets another 10 minutes of Qs and As. On top of that, at every opportunity, when there is a speaker, he makes sure that he is the very first person to ask questions. In fact, I would be surprised if he had not asked questions on every single speech that was given. There might be a few where he has not.

• (1310)

This just goes to show the lengths the government is willing to go to in order to protect Liberal insiders. Canadians deserve to have this information. The challenge with the green slush fund is that it seems as though we find a new layer to this onion of scandal every few weeks. We have found cases in which companies such as Cycle

Capital, which just happened to have the Minister of Environment work for it before, got money. I am sure that is a total coincidence and that is totally A-okay, even though the Minister of Environment still has shares in that very company. That should probably be a bit of a red flag.

We have also spent the last month learning about a variety of different scandals of the Parliament. In fact, should the government finally decide that enough is enough, that it will release the documents so that we can move on to the important business of Parliament, we will then have the next privilege debate on the business partner of the member for Edmonton Centre, Stephen Anderson. We will then have a conversation about that privilege and the lack of answers that he provided when he came to committee.

This is part of a troubling pattern here. The fact that we had someone come to the bar of the House of Commons in this session should be a pretty alarming space. At this point, under the NDP-Liberals over the last nine years, this is what we see.

They keep making these arguments that we cannot direct the RCMP. No one is directing the RCMP. In fact, it is really interesting. There was a company in my riding, a corporation, and they found that there was suspected fraud at their place of business. They assembled all the documents that would help the RCMP in conducting the investigation and provided them to the RCMP; that way, the RCMP could do its job and determine whether there was fraud.

That is precisely what Conservatives are asking to have happen. We are simply asking for the government to not redact information. Frankly, if we cannot trust the RCMP, who can we trust? If Liberals are so concerned about privacy and the RCMP having this information, a whole other series of questions should be asked. The reality of this is that we are asking the government to do its job. We have been able to identify, through a variety of different pieces, that over \$400 million was found to be ineligible or that was in conflict. These pieces include the Auditor General, who is a trustworthy source, not some random, anonymous person. That is a large amount of money. That is more money than most Canadians could imagine.

This is part of the issue: The Liberals continue to sit here and say that they do not believe this should happen. They will cite the same person over and over again, giving all these reasons that they do not think we should release this documentation to the RCMP. Here is the difference between what they are trying to say and what the reality is: The Government of Canada is effectively the employer here. It is government money; it is taxpayer money. We owe it to taxpayers to make sure we are getting to the bottom of this.

If things are not right, we need to investigate this. We need to have the RCMP investigate; it is the organization that has been tasked with getting to the bottom of fraud and a variety of other crimes. We trust the RCMP to deal with a variety of things and keep law and order in our country.

After nine years under the NDP-Liberals, we see rampant crime. We see rampant chaos on our streets. We saw Montreal devolve into a space that was hard to even understand this weekend. There were literally people protesting on the streets of Montreal in anti-Semitic ways, and it took until the next afternoon for the Prime Minister to even condemn those actions. In my opinion, that is very reprehensible. He was busy. He had pre-existing commitments. However, most people can do two things at once. I can chew gum and walk at the same time, and when I have family commitments or different kinds of commitments and something pressing comes up, my phone is never very far away.

● (1315)

I am capable of approving or putting out a statement in real time, effectively, or as close to it as possible, with the exception being if I am on an airplane. However, we know the Prime Minister was not on an airplane and had access to the Internet, so the delay is questionable at best. This is part of the Liberals' track record. They have become so accustomed to scandals that it does not even seem they are concerned about this. I am sure the Liberal members will give answers saying they are concerned about these scandals.

I am going to give a bit of a reminder of the scandals. There was the Prime Minister's cash-for-access scandal, when he invited wealthy people to come and he broke multiple ethics rules. Then the Prime Minister went to the Aga Khan's island, taking a gift of a charter flight, which is against the rules. He is the very first prime minister in Canadian history to actually break the ethics rules. The Liberals are kind of okay with breaking the rules and skirting around things.

Then there were all of the challenges surrounding the Prime Minister's trip to India in 2018 and some of the cultural appropriation, to be fairly vague. I think many Canadians saw the pictures and had some serious concerns as to whether he was a serious prime minister or not. I was an MLA at the time, and I know a lot of my constituents were starting to question and have very serious concerns: "Is this guy serious?" Very quickly, as things have gone through, they have realized that if he is serious, that is even scarier.

Next there was the SNC-Lavalin scandal, which was the second ethics violation. The Prime Minister politically interfered with the Attorney General, a strong indigenous woman, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and effectively fired her, trying to protect SNC-Lavalin and save jobs in Quebec. The company was charged with fraud and corruption and sent \$48 million to the Libyan government between 2001 and 2011. Eventually, the end of that was that Wilson-Raybould, a strong indigenous woman, was thrown out of caucus and is no longer a member of Parliament, but the Liberals are okay with that because they had to protect the Prime Minister.

Then there was a series of different illegal election donations to the Liberals over many years followed by the WE Charity scandal. I think this is when a lot of Canadians really started to say, "Okay, enough is enough. You have got to be joking." The Prime Minister

Privilege

chose WE Charity for a \$912-million contract. He had family ties to the charity through his mother, brother and now ex-wife, who did a variety of paid speaking roles for it. The Prime Minister's mom earned a total of \$250,000 for 28 speaking events, his brother was paid \$32,000 for eight events and his ex-wife also made a variety of appearances. The Prime Minister did not step aside from the cabinet table for discussions on granting the contract to the charity. The crazy part is that after all the scrutiny, the government changed directions and WE Charity was no longer responsible for the contract, but this was after spending a large amount of Canadians' dollars on a scheme without proper oversight.

Then, because those scandals are not enough, we have the arrive scam, where the government paid GC Strategies 118 contracts, worth over \$107 million, to a two-person company. We have had a variety of different organizations and people say this was an app that probably could have been designed in a weekend for about \$80,000, but it was the NDP-Liberal government so why not waste money? Kristian Firth of GC Strategies was called to the bar of the House of Commons for refusing to answer questions at committee. It was the first time that had happened since 1913.

● (1320)

It was kind of cool to be in a historic space and see that process unfold, from a very academic space, but for the sake of transparency and access to Canadians, it is exceptionally troubling that we are in a space where these kinds of things keep happening. The Prime Minister's answer is that it is someone else's fault, that we have experienced it differently or that we have all learned a lesson. It cannot ever be his fault because he refuses to take accountability for any action.

With the member for Edmonton Centre, it took weeks of scandal after scandal being uncovered, and he was not fired. He stepped aside; there was a mutual decision between him and the Prime Minister. In fact, the day before this mutual decision was made, the Prime Minister defended him outside of this country. Part of the problem is there is no ministerial accountability anymore after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. There is no accountability by the Prime Minister or the government after nine years of the NDP-Liberals. They act like it is their money to spend and Canadians should be grateful they are giving them small amounts of their money back.

They are bribing Canadians with a variety of different pieces, including the newest piece of sprinkling their money back to them with this weird two-month pause on GST for a small number of things, but it will not count on everything. This is part of the challenge. It applies to chocolates. If people go to a company like Loblaws and buy a chocolate basket during that two-month period of time, that will be GST exempt, but if they go to a chocolate boutique that specializes in chocolates and buy a chocolate basket, it probably will not be GST-exempt, from the information we have.

Privilege

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has already said this is problematic. Having grown up in a small-business family and after talking to a number of small business owners, I know their point-of-service systems do not allow for quick changes. Yes, many businesses are now digital, so this might not be a bureaucratic nightmare for all businesses, but for small businesses that do not have an electronic point-of-service system, this will be very difficult. It will put a lot of work back on them. This is what the NDP-Liberals do.

They do not want to solve the problem. The solution would be quite simply to axe the carbon tax on everything for everyone for good. That would lower the price of groceries, home heating, fuel and food. That would lower the price of just about everything, but no, they would rather their tax scheme of a carbon tax that is all economic pain and no environmental gain continue to hurt Canadians and then sprinkle little amounts of money back to them.

They are giving a GST exemption on Christmas trees, but their GST exemption is only going to start on December 14. Most people already have their Christmas trees purchased by December 14, so I am not quite sure who this is going to help. I am sure there will be a few, but I am really nervous about not knowing all the details on this. The devil is in the details. Will this end up meaning that a whole bunch of Canadians will delay all of their Christmas and holiday shopping until once this GST vacation is in place, therefore making it really difficult for businesses that are already struggling because of out-of-control spending by the government and the crippling carbon tax that makes keeping the lights on more difficult for small businesses? Will they have a harder time and end up having their sales in a shorter window, making the customer experience more difficult and their overall experience less enjoyable?

These are the realities. After nine years, the NDP-Liberals have lost the plot. They have lost the ability to realize that the decisions they make, and that continuing to block good documents from going to the RCMP unredacted, are going to hurt Canadians. Eventually, this information is going to come out. The question is whether they are going to wait until after the next election or do the right thing, get Parliament back to work and release the documents unredacted.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member focused her attention on scandals. The leader of the Conservative Party, directly and indirectly, when he was part of the Stephen Harper government, was involved in scandals, and I will give a bit of a list. There were the anti-terrorism scandal of \$3.1 billion; the Phoenix scandal of \$2.2 billion; the G8 spending scandal; the ETS \$400-million scandal; the F-35 scandal; the Senate scandal; and elections scandals, plural. He is directly involved in one of those, too, by the way. Then I have “Stephen Harper, Serial Abuser of Power”, in which there are scandals, corruption and abuse of power. It is hefty book, with 70 different scandals.

Who would the member opposite recommend that her constituents listen to, the RCMP, the Auditor General or the politically motivated, self-serving leader of the Conservative Party, on the issue of giving the documents directly to the RCMP? Do we ignore

what the RCMP, the Auditor General and law experts are saying all because she wants to follow her leader?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, it was a really interesting time when I first started paying attention to politics. It was right around the time of the Liberal sponsorship scandal, when there was cash from Liberal coffers being put into envelopes. The Liberals were literally stuffing envelopes with cash. There was so much money and that actually brought down Paul Martin's government. If the parliamentary secretary is going to go into the issue of scandals, he really has to be careful, because at least Paul Martin did the right thing. Eventually the New Democrats supported the Conservatives in bringing down that government because they realized their job was to keep accountability for Canadians. The costly coalition of the NDP-Liberals has literally sprinkled a little bit of GST vacation for a couple months on a few products, just to buy back support for the failed marriage of the NDP-Liberals.

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the members today who have highlighted the riots in Montreal over the weekend. I would draw attention for a moment to the different symbols we saw there. We saw the hammer and sickle, we saw Daesh flags and we saw watermelon buttons as well.

I am new in this House and I am often reminded of that by the members opposite, who must feel threatened in some way by me to try to take down the most rookie MP on this side. Because I am new, could my colleague comment on whether the deflection from the government is something that you have seen a lot over time, or is that something new?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the hon. member that I cannot comment on anything, but the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, I am sure, will.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, there might be a difference between whether you want to share your opinion and whether you are able to share your opinion.

To my colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's, it is so spectacular to have a Conservative in that seat within the GTA, representing those views. I have been so fortunate in the couple of months we have been able to work together to learn from the member and to learn some of the unique challenges that people in Toronto are facing that we had not heard because no one on the Liberal benches brings those concerns forward as it is not politically salient to them.

The member raises some very serious concerns regarding the Jewish community and the sense of safety and the lack of safety. It is not just the sense. People do not feel safe, but they no longer are safe. I want to thank the member for his amazing advocacy for the people of Toronto—St. Paul's and I look forward to adding more members from the GTA, with his help, in the next election, whenever that happens to be.

Privilege

• (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in listening to the member opposite, we get the sense she might be a bit nervous in regard to the tax break the government is providing Canadians through the GST. It is almost as if the Conservatives are a little scared. They do not want to vote against it and yet they are being obligated, possibly by their leader, to vote against it.

I wonder if the member could give us a clear indication of the Conservative Party with regard to this issue. Will she, as an individual member of Parliament, vote against the tax break? Does she believe the Conservatives will be voting against the tax break that the government is providing to Canadians for two months?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, this weekend, I went home as I often do. I actually go home every weekend. When I travel, on Friday mornings, I leave Ottawa at five o'clock in the morning, so it is a pretty early flight. I often am wearing a hoodie and I am rather incognito. People do not often realize I am a member of Parliament when I get on.

When I got on my final flight from Calgary to Fort McMurray, there was a group of people. They did not know I was a member of Parliament. They were talking about the so-called tax breaks, this vacation on GST on a small number of items. They were talking about how they were so frustrated that the NDP-Liberals think they can buy people's votes by giving a small amount of their money back just in time for Christmas. It was really interesting, what one particular woman said very clearly. I went over and afterwards said, "I am the member of Parliament; it is great to meet you." The woman had said, "If they really wanted to make a difference, they would axe the carbon tax. That has a bigger impact on my life."

This is one of the pieces. We are not going to take any lessons from that member or from them on what they think affordability is for Canadians because Canadians in my riding, and from coast to coast to coast, see the impact of the carbon tax on their heating bill. They see the impact of the carbon tax every time they fill up their vehicle with gasoline and every time they get their gas bill. I am sorry, but a small amount of money sprinkled in a very abstract, obscure way for two months is not going to provide the help Canadians who are struggling to put food on their table need. Like I said, one in five children is living in poverty in Canada and that is due to the NDP-Liberal mismanagement of the economy.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, in her last response, the member mentioned children. Like I am, the member is a mother; she has two beautiful young children. We were talking earlier this week, when the announcement was made, about the different expenses she has as a mother.

Perhaps the member could make some comments on the new announcement, relative to being a mother and as to the little impact that the announcement will have on her day-to-day necessities as a mother of two children.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, this is one of the interesting pieces. Maybe in some parts of the country people can wait until December 14 to buy their children winter boots or a winter jacket. That is not the case in most parts of rural Canada. In fact I just pulled up the weather app. It is -13°C in Fort McMurray. There is full snow cover.

I cannot wait in order to save 5% on a snowsuit, wait another month before my children have appropriate winter gear. Parents cannot afford to do that, because they would be putting their children in danger. This is part of the struggle.

Like I said earlier, if the government really cared about helping Canadians who are struggling with the cost of living crisis that it caused, there is a very simple answer: It could axe the carbon tax on everything for everyone for always. That would actually have an impact and allow parents to choose how they are going to support their family.

The reality is a 5% savings on diapers for a family in Alberta. I did some calculations, and I spend about \$100 a month on diapers, so that means a \$5 savings. If I shop for the diapers while they are on sale, which is probably not going to fall when the GST holiday actually falls, I can save \$11. I am better off to just wait for a sale on diapers if I can afford to stock up. However, most families cannot afford to stock up right now because the Liberals have made it so difficult because of their ever-increasing tax burden.

There is good news and hope on the horizon. Common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax for everyone on all the items for always when it comes to the carbon tax.

• (1335)

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise in the chamber to discuss issues that speak to the heart of Canadian democracy: the responsible use of public funds, the ethical governance of our institutions and the accountability of elected officials.

The recent scandal surrounding Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, is not just about mismanagement; it also represents a betrayal of the trust Canadians place in their government. The matter is too important to be relegated to committee rooms or buried in bureaucracy. It is the business of the House of Commons to shine a light on a troubling case and to demand answers on behalf of Canadians. The Conservative Party of Canada is unwavering in its commitment to bringing the issue to the forefront, because the problems are deeper and more systemic within the current NDP-Liberal coalition government.

The matter is not an isolated case of a single program veering off course; it represents a troubling pattern of governance marked by a blatant disregard for ethical standards. The scandal surrounding Sustainable Development Technology Canada underscores a broader failure to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability and integrity, principles that are the bedrock of public service and democracy.

Privilege

The pattern is not new. Canadians have seen time and time again how the government prioritizes its political allies over the needs of the people it was elected to serve. Whether it is through mismanagement of public funds, or through conflicts of interest or lack of transparency, the actions of the government betray a troubling disregard for the trust placed in it by Canadians. Each new revelation adds to a growing sense that corruption and insider dealings have become the norm, eroding public confidence in government institutions and creating a sense of disillusionment, frustration and disappointment among the people.

“Transparency”, “accountability” and “integrity” are not mere buzzwords or lofty ideals; they are practical, essential principles, pillars that guide how a government should function.

Transparency ensures that the public has access to the information it needs in order to hold its leaders accountable. It allows for Canadians to see how their tax dollars are being spent and whether those expenditures align with the public interest. Without transparency, the government operates in the shadows, free from scrutiny and unburdened by the consequences of its actions.

Accountability goes hand in hand with transparency. It is a mechanism by which leaders are held responsible for their decisions and actions. In a democratic system, accountability ensures that no one is above the law, and it provides a safeguard against abuse of power. For the government to refuse to release unredacted documents despite a direct order from Parliament is to undermine this critical pillar of democracy. Such behaviour sets a dangerous precedent, suggesting that the government is willing to disregard its obligations to the public and to the institution of Parliament itself.

Integrity, the third pillar, is about more than following the rules; it is about doing what is right, even when no one is watching. It is about prioritizing the public good over personal gain or political expediency. The scandals that have plagued the current government reveal a profound lack of integrity. When public servants approve funding that benefits their own ventures, when conflicts of interest go unchecked and when leaders refuse to admit fault or take corrective action, they compromise the very foundation of trust upon which governance is built.

That is why the Conservative Party of Canada is determined to bring the issue to the attention of every Canadian. It is not just about recovering the misused \$400 million or addressing the 186 documented conflicts of interest. It is also about sending a clear message that the days of unaccountable governance must come to an end. It is about restoring faith in our democratic institutions and proving that elected officials can and will be held to the highest standards of conduct.

• (1340)

This moment is an opportunity to reaffirm what good governance looks like. It is a chance to remind Canadians that they deserve better than corruption, secrecy and mismanagement. They deserve a government that respects their hard-earned tax dollars, governs with honesty and fairness and holds itself accountable to the people who elected it.

The Conservative Party is ready to lead by example, offering Canadians a government that places transparency, accountability

and integrity at the heart of its agenda. This is a commitment. It is a core value that will guide every decision, every policy and every action. Canadians deserve nothing less than a government they can trust, a government that serves them, not itself.

Let us revisit the purpose for which SDTC was established. Launched in 2001, the initiative was intended to position Canada as a leader in clean technology. Its mandate was ambitious but clear: to fund projects that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and water quality and promote sustainable resource use. By supporting early-stage innovations, SDTC aimed to drive environmental processes while fostering economic growth.

At its best, SDTC represented the kind of forward-thinking policy Canadians expect from their government. It was instrumental in supporting breakthroughs across various sectors. In the energy sector, it facilitated advancements in renewable energy, energy storage and efficiency. In agriculture, it championed projects that improved sustainability, reduced emissions and conserved water. In transportation, it promoted innovations that reduced the carbon footprint of public transit and supported the transition to electric mobility.

Beyond providing the funding, SDTC acted as a bridge between diverse stakeholders, industry, academia, researchers and government agencies. By fostering collaboration, it accelerated the development and commercialization of technologies that benefited not just Canada but also the global community. This collaborative approach was essential for turning ambitious ideas into practical solutions.

However, under the government's watch, SDTC strayed far from its noble purpose. Instead of being a model of innovation and environmental stewardship, it became a glaring example of mismanagement and ethical lapses. The Auditor General's recent findings reveal a shocking misuse of nearly \$400 million in taxpayer funds.

This is not merely an administrative failure. It is an ethical crisis that demands immediate action. The Auditor General's report details a pattern of conflicts of interest that would be unacceptable in any organization, let alone one funded by public taxpayer money.

Of the \$400 million allocated, \$334 million went to projects linked to board members with clear conflicts of interest. Nine board members were implicated in a staggering 186 conflicts. They were using their positions to approve funding for projects that directly benefited themselves or their associates.

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One particularly shocking case involved a board member who, at the same time, ran a venture capital firm. This individual approved \$114 million in funding for companies her firm had previously invested in, directly enriching herself and her business. Such blatant self-dealing is not only unethical, but it also undermines public confidence in the very institutions designed to serve the public good.

The systematic nature of these abuses is further underscored by the Auditor General's findings. Of the 405 transactions approved by SDTC's board over five years, the Auditor General reviewed 226. Of these, 82% involved conflicts of interest. That is 82% of the 226 that were reviewed. This staggering figure reveals a governance structure riddled with ethical lapses and a lack of oversight.

The mismanagement does not stop there. The Auditor General found that \$58 million was allocated to projects that did not meet the program's qualifying criteria. These funds were disbursed without proper contribution agreements, which is a clear indication of administrative negligence.

The Liberal government's industry minister, who is tasked with the oversight of SDTC, failed to implement the necessary checks and balances. This oversight failure enabled nearly half a billion dollars to be mismanaged. When confronted with these findings, the government's response was not to accept accountability or implement corrective measures. Instead, it chose to obstruct efforts to uncover the truth.

Despite a parliamentary order requiring the release of unredacted documents related to SDTC, the government has refused to comply. Departments, such as Finance Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development, have withheld critical information, either redacting key details or refusing to produce the documents entirely. This refusal is not just an administrative oversight. It is a direct challenge to parliamentary authority and, by extension, to the Canadian people.

The Speaker of the House has ruled that the government's actions violate parliamentary privilege, yet the obstruction persists, raising serious questions about the government's commitment to transparency and accountability. The consequences of this scandal are not limited to the financial mismanagement of SDTC. They extend to the broader economic and social challenges facing Canadians today.

The misuse of public funds comes at a time when families are struggling to make ends meet. Inflation has driven up the cost of living, making it harder for Canadians to afford basic necessities such as food and housing. The cost of groceries has skyrocketed, with the average family expected to spend an additional \$700 this year compared to 2023.

Food insecurity is on the rise, with Stats Canada reporting an increase from 11.6% in 2018 to 15.6% in 2022. Visits to food banks have surged by 50% since 2021, highlighting the growing number of Canadians who cannot afford to feed their families. The Cranbrook Foodbank Society has had so many people needing its services. It used to provide three bags of groceries to people, and now, with the increase in demand, the huge numbers of families and individuals needing help, it can only hand out one bag.

• (1345)

Housing affordability has reached the crisis point. Families are living in cars because they cannot afford rent, and young Canadians are staying at home longer because they cannot afford to buy a house. Rising crime rates add to the sense of insecurity and frustration felt by many communities.

These challenges are amplified by the government's policies. The carbon tax, for example, has increased costs across the supply chain, affecting farmers, ranchers, truckers and consumers alike. Economists have warned that this tax imposes a significant burden on families already struggling with inflation. Meanwhile, the inflationary spending of the government has driven up prices across the board, eroding the purchasing power of Canadian households.

The \$400 million that was misused in this scandal could have been directed towards addressing these pressing issues. It could have funded affordable housing projects, supported food security initiatives or enhanced public safety programs. Instead, it was squandered on projects that served the interests of a privileged few, enriching Liberal insiders at the expense of ordinary Canadians. This scandal is not just about money. It is about trust. Canadians expect their government to act in their best interests, to manage public funds responsibly and to uphold the highest ethical standards. When those expectations are not met, the very foundation of our democracy is called into question.

The Conservative Party of Canada believes in a different approach. We believe in transparency, accountability and fiscal responsibility. Canadians deserve a government that respects their tax dollars and invests them wisely. They deserve leaders who prioritize their needs over political self-interest.

The refusal to release the SDTC documents is not just a bureaucratic failure; it is a morale failure. It delays justice, obstructs accountability and prevents Parliament from addressing the real issues that affect Canadians. Parliament must act decisively to address the systematic issues that allowed this scandal to occur. The government must comply with the Speaker's order and release the unredacted documents related to SDTC.

Privilege

Canadians are watching closely, and they expect their elected representatives to rise to the occasion. The call for transparency and accountability is not about political parties or ideological divides. It transcends partisanship because it speaks to the very essence of good governance. These principles form the foundation of a healthy democracy and are critical to maintaining the trust between citizens and those they elect to serve. When public trust is undermined, so too is the legitimacy of our democratic institutions, making the restoration of that trust not only necessary but also urgent.

In this chamber, we hold a profound responsibility, a responsibility to act in the best interests of people who have entrusted us with their votes. This means ensuring that every dollar of public money is allocated ethically, spent effectively and accounted for transparently. This means recognizing that the people of Canada deserve more than big assurances and cloudy processes. They deserve a government that is forthright, principled and unafraid to confront its own failures.

The issue before us is not simply about numbers or stats. It is about values. Mismanagement of public funds erodes more than just the financial health of our nation. It erodes confidence in the very system that is meant to serve the public. When scandals emerge, such as those surrounding Sustainable Development Technology Canada, they do more than waste resources. They weaken the belief that the government operates in the interests of all Canadians, not just a select few.

The House must rise to meet this moment by reaffirming its unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability. These are not optional virtues. They are the cornerstones of democracy. Without them, the ties that bind citizens to their government fray, leaving space for cynicism and disengagement to take root. Canadians must see that their representatives are united in their determination to uphold these principles, no matter how difficult or politically inconvenient it may be.

• (1350)

The people of Canada are looking to us to restore trust, and trust cannot be demanded. It must be earned. It requires us to demand answers when questions arise, to push for the investigations when irregularities are discovered, and to ensure consequences for those who express outrage. We must deliver outcomes. That is what accountability looks like and that is what the people of Canada deserve. By taking a firm stand now, we can demonstrate that Canada's democracy is resilient. It is strong enough to withstand scrutiny, bold enough to demand answers and principled enough to hold even the most powerful leaders accountable.

The strength is not given. It reflects the collective will of the House to act in the interests of the nation rather than the interests of political expediency. This moment is an opportunity to prove that our institutions are worthy of the trust placed in them. It is a chance to reaffirm the democratic values that define us as a nation and to show Canadians that their voices matter.

The House must seize the opportunity not just to address the issue at hand but to send a broader message that the integrity of our democracy is non-negotiable. As parliamentarians, we have a duty to protect and uphold the principles that underpin democracy. This is not just about recovering lost funds or addressing specific inci-

dents of wrongdoing. It is about preserving the integrity of our system of governance for generations to come. Let us take a moment to recommit ourselves to that duty and show Canadians that we are worthy of their trust.

On July 10, the elected House, representing the will of Canadians, ordered the government to release all relevant documents tied to the green slush fund. That deadline has come and gone, and 166 days later, we are still waiting. This blatant disregard for parliamentary orders shows how little respect the Liberal government has for the institution. Canadians deserve transparency and accountability.

• (1355)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member referred to rents. With inflation falling to 2% and interest rates getting cut four times, the rents in places like Toronto and Vancouver are falling by over 9%, year over year. The member also talked about affordable housing. I would like to get his comments on the housing accelerator fund and whether he is in support of it even now.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, I can say that, when I go back to Kootenay—Columbia, when I talk to the people of Kootenay—Columbia, they cannot afford to buy groceries. I am not too sure where that member is shopping or where they are getting their prices. Prices have gone up so much that they cannot afford to buy everything they need. We need to start to do something about that. Right now, we are not doing anything other than spending money that we do not have.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, if anything, this scandal has taught us that “the players gonna play, play, play, play...the fakers gonna fake, fake, fake, fake”, and the government cannot shake this scandal off.

There is a reason why this scandal is so profoundly scandalous, and that is that Canadians are impoverished. They are finding it hard to afford their groceries, yet Liberal-connected insiders and cronies are benefiting to the tune, in this case, of \$400 million, and there was more in the past. Would the hon. member not agree that this just cannot be the case and that we have to get to the bottom of this?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, yes, that is absolutely correct. What we are talking about here is \$400 million and 186 ethical violations, yet, from across the road, we are talking about historical issues and things that are not even relevant to the \$400 million. If that \$400 million was sent to Kootenay—Columbia, we can imagine what we could do with that money, how we could help people.

We need to find out where that money went and to ensure that all of the ethical violations are followed up through an investigation, so that we do not have this happen again.

Statements by Members

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the words my hon. colleague hit on quite extensively was the word “trust”. He spoke about it quite extensively throughout his 20-minute speech. The reality is that Canadians across the country have lost trust in the government. Part of what the government is trying to do is to distract people from truly understanding what it is, because \$400 million is not chump change. It is a lot of money, and it affects Canadians all across this country, especially in his riding.

I am wondering if the member would mind commenting again on how, through calling people out on this trust issue, it will bring that trust, faith and consistency back to Canadians.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, trust is something that has to be earned, and that is not happening in the government today.

Trust has to be earned by one's actions. When the government is not accountable and is not giving the unredacted documents that have been asked for regarding the \$400 million, that tells Canadians the government does not care.

Where are they? Why are they not unredacted? What has happened to our government that it is not producing those documents?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

ATTACK IN PAKISTAN

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of Shia Muslims across Canada, I condemn the recent deadly attack in Pakistan. On November 21, gunmen ambushed convoys of Shia Muslims in Kurram district, killing at least 38 individuals, including women and children.

Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims generally coexist peacefully in Pakistan. However, militant groups like Deobandi militant groups, Salafi extremist groups affiliated with the Islamic State, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, and the Barelvi group's Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan indulge in the killing of Shia Muslims in Pakistan. Motivated by sectarian ideologies, these groups are responsible for numerous brutal incidents in recent years. They operate almost freely due to the absence of a political will to prosecute them.

I call on Canada to condemn the killings and to convey to Pakistan the deep concerns of Shia Muslims across Canada.

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COMMUNITY LEADERS IN DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER—NEEPAWA

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the incredible and ongoing contributions of Ken and Christine Waddell.

Ken and Christine Waddell have spent their entire career working to promote local journalism. Fifty-seven years ago, they began a publishing career together at the University of Manitoba. They would go on to spend their personal and professional lives owning

and operating many local publishing companies, providing a valuable local lens for their communities. This includes 35 years with the Neepawa Banner and Press, 32 years with the Rivers Banner and, as of this year, being the new owners of the Virden Empire-Advance.

However, their contributions do not stop with their publishing business. They are both actively engaged in their community of Neepawa. Ken has volunteered much of his time with the Neepawa Titans hockey team, and Christine has volunteered much of her time with the Tangled Threads Quilt Club and the Neepawa Rotary Club.

On behalf of the House of Commons, I want to thank them for being pillars in their community and for giving a voice to rural Canadians for so many years. Our country is a much better place because of them.

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SYNDROME OF UNKNOWN CAUSE IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the cluster of progressive neurological symptoms of unknown etiology in New Brunswick. The people of my beautiful province need our help, and it is long past time we acknowledge the patients and their families, who have been fighting this battle for years. They deserve answers. They deserve action. They deserve a diagnosis so we can begin to treat them, improve their quality of life and save lives.

To all the heroes who have been shouting from the rooftops when no one was listening, all of New Brunswick owes them a debt of gratitude. We must come together now to get to the bottom of this unsettling situation. When the first cases began and the alarm was raised, too often those in a position of power chose to look away and chose to avoid drawing attention to the matter by downplaying and detracting.

New Brunswick matters. Our health matters. We do not yet know what is causing the devastating and rapid onset of symptoms that patients are experiencing. We do not know why those living in the Acadian Peninsula and indigenous and young people under 45 are among the most afflicted, but we owe it to them to find out.

I call on our government to be there and to work with experts and provincial partners to finally end the suffering and silence.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, d'Adil Charkaoui is exhorting crowds to pray for Israel to be wiped off the map at protests where people are setting cars on fire and breaking shop windows. Protests in Montreal are becoming more and more violent, and the target of this violence is increasingly clear: Quebec's Jewish community. It is beyond intolerable that a human rights defender like Irwin Cotler has been threatened and placed under police protection in Quebec, that synagogues are being fired upon and that people are being intimidated, assaulted and threatened because they are Jewish.

People are entitled to demonstrate, people are entitled to support Gaza in the conflict with Israel. We cannot remain insensitive to the fate of the people of Gaza. We have seen the suffering of women and children in the Gaza Strip and we too want this war to come to an end, but nothing justifies this emerging antisemitism. These anti-semitic acts are a stain on pro-Palestinians and on Quebec. It is high time they ended.

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TREES OF HOPE

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past 11 years, the Fairmont Château Montebello has organized a major Christmas tree-decorating celebration known as Trees of Hope. The majestic Château is filled with trees sponsored and decorated by generous local businesses, and all the money raised is donated to the Petite-Nation food bank.

I had the pleasure of decorating my Tree of Hope this year with my daughters Jade and Jana, and it is adorned with the colours and symbols that represent our beautiful country. I invite everyone to go and admire the Trees of Hope, which will be on display throughout the holiday season. Visitors can choose their favourite. More importantly, I invite people to give generously to food banks and the Petite-Nation food bank. These organizations are on the front lines when it comes to offering help to the most needy in our communities.

I would like to thank the Fairmont Château Montebello for this wonderful initiative.

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● (1405)

[English]

LOBSTER FISHING IN NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is dumping day. No, it is not another Liberal cabinet shuffle. Tomorrow, in Lobster fishing areas 33 and 34, almost 2,000 fishing boats from Prospect Bay, New Harbour, Lunenburg, Liverpool, Cape Sable Island, Shag Harbour, St. Mary's Bay and Digby will set out before dawn to dump up to 400 lobster traps per boat into the deep, briny sea. Tomorrow, legal fishermen will be fishing the best lobster in the world in the most important fishery in Nova Scotia, from the edge of the shore to 80 miles out in the North Atlantic from now until May. With waves crashing over them

in storms and sunny days to catch the food we eat, it is the most dangerous fishery in the world.

My wish for these lobster harvesters is that the seas be calm and that the lobsters be crawling. May the fishing grounds be prosperous, making long days seem short. May the shore prices and markets be steady, and may the thoughts of loved ones and family guide them safely back to port each day of the season.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This is a scourge that continues to afflict my community of London and communities across the country. It is, of course, incumbent on all governments to lead the charge against it, but alongside us and on the ground, we have outstanding not-for-profit organizations carrying out the work.

One example is the London Abused Women's Centre. This organization tirelessly devotes itself to the cause. In fact, in 2010, it began the Shine the Light campaign, which every night sees businesses and other organizations in our community put on a purple light. It illuminates this campaign so we can see more action against the scourge that is violence against women. The effort has continued and has gone beyond that. Tonight, the Peace Tower will be lit in purple. It is international as well.

There is much more to do, but because of organizations like LAWC, we have hope.

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I am thinking about all the women suffering from abuse I met during my journalism career and all the families I got to know covering criminal cases caused by femicide.

Gender-based violence does not stop at physical harm. It includes psychological and economic manipulation, which also have devastating effects that perpetuate cycles of violence and endure for generations. All of us have a responsibility to reflect on this, particularly men and boys.

We heard this recently at a status of women committee hearing. Attitudes and behaviours that objectify and belittle women create a culture of violence. Hashtags like "men going their own way", used by the Leader of the Opposition in his videos, further entrench violent attitudes in our society.

These are not new issues, but for the first time we have a government actually doing something about them with a national action plan to end gender-based violence. It is not everything we have to do, but it is a strong start, and on this side of the House we will not relent until every woman is safe.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

ROUGE ET OR FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Université Laval's Rouge et Or football team on winning the 59th Vanier Cup. Once again, after taking home the prestigious Vanier Cup for the 12th time, this team has proven to be a powerhouse of Canadian university football.

The Rouge et Or has shown that success is a matter of strategy, teamwork, and unfailing resilience. Its performance was nothing short of jaw-dropping. To seize victory at the national finals with six field goals is one for the record books.

Every player, coach, and staff member should be proud of this accomplishment. The Rouge et Or's inspiring example reaches far beyond the football field. It is the pride of Université Laval, of Quebec and of everyone who believes in the power of hard work and team spirit.

May the Rouge et Or, a university sport dynasty, continue to aim higher and higher, to exceed expectations, and to embody the values of excellence. Congratulations to the entire team for its outstanding victory.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the first day of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Violence against women is one of the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations in the world and disproportionately impacts women from minority groups. I am proud of our government's work to fight gender-based violence at home and abroad, which includes the 10-year action plan to end gender-based violence here in Canada, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and standing up for women internationally, as with the *zan, zendegi, azadi* movement in Iran and the women of Afghanistan.

Our government has supported women's groups across Canada, including the York Region Women's Foundation in my riding. On this side, we support frontline organizations that protect women and educate young people, including young men, about the need to have healthy relationships. These are all programs that Conservatives cut under Harper and will cut again if they get the chance.

Violence against women is not only a women's issue; it is a societal issue that we should all come together and act now to end. Let us eliminate gender-based violence, not the programs that fight against it.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP members are a bunch of sellouts. Despite the

leader of the NDP's media stunt where he ripped up the coalition deal and said, "the Liberals are too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people," he continues to prop up the Prime Minister and his failed caucus. The leader of the NDP voted for the carbon tax over 24 times, pushing Canadians to food banks in record-smashing numbers with over two million visits in a single month. The leader of the NDP supports soft-on-crime policies and hard drug legalization that have led to a 50% increase in violent crime, causing chaos, death and destruction.

The NDP has supported housing and fiscal policies that have driven an entire generation out of home ownership, leaving young people hopeless about their future. Every day the Prime Minister remains in power, it is because the NDP keeps him there. Let us call a carbon tax election now. Let us bring some common sense back to Canada.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Prime Minister, life has never been more expensive for Canadians. Grocery prices have skyrocketed and Canadians are struggling to feed their families. Record numbers of Canadians are being forced to rely on food banks to survive and many food banks are running out of food. Food insecurity has reached such alarming levels that 27 cases of scurvy have been identified in northern Saskatchewan. The patients all had one thing in common: a lack of nutritious food. This should not be happening in Canada.

This is the shameful record of the Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the worst is yet to come. This costly NDP-Liberal coalition is hell-bent on quadrupling the carbon tax, which will only make everything more expensive. Canadians deserve access to safe, nutritious and affordable food. Only common-sense Conservatives will bring home lower prices by axing the tax on groceries permanently.

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[Translation]

AFFORDABILITY MEASURES

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, our government delivered on its promise to put more money back in the pockets of Nickel Belt residents and all Canadians.

With a tax break for everyone and a new rebate for working Canadians, we are ensuring that families can save and workers can succeed. The Conservative leader's response is to muzzle his MPs. The Conservatives are ready to cut essential services that Canadians rely on every day, such as child care and health care.

Oral Questions

Canadians deserve better than what the Conservatives are offering. The announcement is an example of how our government is ensuring that workers and families can afford what they need and save on some of the things they want. I hope all members of the House will support our efforts to reduce costs for Nickel Belt residents and all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the NDP stands in solidarity with women, girls and gender-diverse people facing violence in our communities and around the world. Globally, nearly one in three women have faced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, and every day 140 women and girls are killed by family members. From Afghanistan to Ukraine, from Gaza to Sudan, the realities of war disproportionately devastate women, robbing them of safety, dignity and opportunity.

Canada must do more. A feminist foreign policy means committing to peacekeeping, supporting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and ensuring women are at the forefront of conflict resolution and recovery. Violence against women is not inevitable. It is a choice that we can work to end together. We must act boldly and compassionately for a world where everyone is free from violence and fear.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

ROUGE ET OR FOOTBALL TEAM

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec City is a city of champions. Université Laval's Rouge et Or won the Vanier Cup for the 12th time. This victory makes it the most successful team in Canada.

The kicker and player of the game, Felipe Forteza, gave an extraordinary performance. His golden foot scored 18 of the 22 winning points. Then there is the work of head coach Glen Constantin, a true legend of Quebec football. His players were shut out of the league's individual awards ceremony, but they made up for it by winning, as the coach says, the only trophy that no one votes on.

Since 1995, the entire organization has had the best program in Quebec and Canada. Congratulations to the entire Rouge et Or organization, the players, the parents and the fans. They are unbeatable champions.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister dances while Montreal burns. Over the weekend, Montreal was attacked by a vicious anti-Semitic mob. It attacked police, lit vehicles on fire and

bashed in windows while the Prime Minister was busy dancing at a Taylor Swift concert.

This is what we get from a Prime Minister who, for nine years, has divided Canadians. He divided us by race, religion, region, age and wealth. He has opened our borders to criminals and terrorists who attack law-abiding Canadian citizens. What is the result? It is firebombings of synagogues, extremists attacking mandirs and gurdwaras, over 100 churches burned and vandalized, and hate crime up 251%. When it comes to fighting anti-Semitism, Second Cup has morechutzpah than this weak Prime Minister.

Canadians need an election now so that Conservatives can restore our values, our freedoms, and law and order in this country.

* * *

AFFORDABILITY MEASURES

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity today to talk about something that will make a real difference in the lives of my constituents.

Starting December 14, we are giving a tax break to all Canadians along with a new working Canadians rebate, which will be delivered starting in early spring 2025. With new tax relief on groceries and seasonal expenses, and a rebate for working Canadians, we are reducing costs when they are the highest for Canadians. These measures will build on the government's work to ensure that Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets.

From introducing \$10-a-day day care to tax breaks to the middle class and small businesses, we have consistently targeted solutions that put money into Canadians' pockets. However, let us not forget one thing. The Conservatives want to cut these programs and they want to make Canadians pay for more out of their own pocket. Instead of offering solutions to Canadians, like we are doing on this side, they continue to focus on empty slogans.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the violent protests in Montreal are the result of a Prime Minister who has spent nine years promoting woke, toxic identity politics, diving people by race, gender, vaccination status and on and on.

Oral Questions

On top of dividing people, he is erasing our history and allowing terrorists and criminals into our country. The result? A 251% increase in hate crimes.

When will he call an election so we can repair what he has broken?

● (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear, what was on display in Montreal just this past weekend was criminality. The violence, the hatred and the anti-Semitism that took place in Montreal is completely unacceptable, and everyone in this House must condemn it in the strongest possible terms.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the lawless hate riot that we saw on the streets of Montreal is what happens after nine years of a woke Prime Minister pushing radical, woke identity politics, dividing people by race, gender, vaccine status, religion and more.

On top of dividing, the Prime Minister erases our heroes and history, saying Canada has no core identity. He opened the borders to terrorists and lawbreakers. The results were assassinations on Canadian soil, firebombings and terrorist attacks against places of worship and 251% more hate crime.

It was not like this before the Prime Minister and will not be after he is gone. Why not call an election so we can fix what he broke?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I personally believe that it is shameful that anyone would speak of the violence that took place on our streets here in Canada in political terms for purely partisan political intention.

I believe it is all of our responsibility to stand up to such hatred and to condemn it in the strongest possible terms, unequivocally and on behalf of all decent Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister has doubled the cost of housing and inflated the price of food 37% faster here in Canada than in the United States. Now he is using a gimmick so people can save 10¢ on a bag of chips or save money on Halloween costumes, when Halloween is already over.

What did the Bloc Québécois get for keeping the Prime Minister in power? There is nothing for seniors. The leader of the Bloc Québécois is all talk and no action.

When will there be an election so that we can cut taxes and make room for real savings?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the real question: Who is all talk and who is all action? Today, every member of this Parliament has the right and the obligation to help Canadians and Quebecers with a small rebate and a bit of help.

My question is this: Will the Conservative members have the right to vote for their constituents?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after doubling housing costs and inflating food prices 37% faster in Canada than in the United States, with inflationary carbon taxes and deficit spending, the Prime Minister now has a tiny two-month tax trick that will save Canadians 10¢ on a pack of chips, a few pennies on a Christmas tree, but only after their Christmas tree is already up and decorated. They will even save on Halloween costumes, two months after Halloween.

Does the Prime Minister really expect Canadians to fall for this tiny tax trick just before he quadruples the carbon tax on heat, homes, gas and groceries?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really glad the Leader of the Opposition started by comparing our economic position with the U.S., because the fact is, in Canada, inflation is lower. In Canada, interest rates are lower. In Canada, deficits are lower. In Canada, the public debt is lower. Let us stop talking Canada down.

When it comes to supporting Canadians, what I want to know is, will Conservative MPs be allowed to offer a tax break to their constituents? I know their constituents want it. That is what we are hearing from everyone.

* * *

● (1425)

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is from a minister who, after finding out that the economy is entering its sixth consecutive quarter of shrinking per capita GDP, is income per person, is down while the American income per person is up, and after learning that there are two million people lined up at food banks, 38% more chronic homelessness and 1,400 homeless encampments in Ontario after nine years of the government, says that we are not in a recession. We are in a vibecession, she says.

What is the minister's message to people who are hungry and homeless after nine years of her government? Do they just need to get with the vibe?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my message to the leader of the Conservatives is to be a little more economically literate. I guess he did not look at the recent GDP revisions, the upward revisions in GDP that show a good result for Canada in per capita GDP. They also show that Canada has not had a recession, contrary to the predictions of many people when there was the COVID recession. We have had a soft landing; that is something to celebrate.

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[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in regard to the Bloc Québécois's useless measures on supply management and pensioners, let me remind the House that the young man who leads the official opposition voted in favour of those measures.

That being said, the government wants to implement measures to support the purchasing power of Quebecers and Canadians. The government must realize that these measures will be more beneficial and accessible to people who are millionaires and that cheques will be sent to people earning \$150,000, including members of Parliament.

Does the government realize that it is turning its back on those who really need help?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take the Bloc Québécois's concerns about seniors very seriously. I take them seriously because our government shares those concerns.

That is why our government has done more to support seniors across Canada than any other federal government. This year, Canadian seniors will receive \$48 billion in federal support. It is only fair, because they deserve it.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the math required is the same math that people are doing at home. I am talking about people between the ages of 65 and 74 in particular, whose purchasing power has not changed in years and who are being singled out for discrimination. They are not going to get the Liberal government's vote-buying cheque.

I do not get it. Can someone tell me how the Liberals managed to convince the NDP to support that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by clarifying one detail. I know that a lot of seniors are still working. Working seniors will receive the cheque.

I also want to say that I think we all understand that seniors 75 and over are more vulnerable. They need more help. That is why our government knows that we need to give them more support.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do members know what is cruel? The Liberal government is excluding seniors, people living with disabilities and people who just started working from receiving the \$250 cheque that is going out in spring. What a slap in the face that is.

Why is the Liberal government excluding the most vulnerable in our country?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the NDP leader and all members of the House will help work with us to unblock Parliament and to get the support to Canadians that they need and deserve.

When it comes to the working Canadians rebate, we know that there are hard-working people across the country who have been through challenging times. We know that now is the time to provide them with extra support. I hope all MPs will join us in doing that.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers, seniors, people living with disabilities and young people just getting their first job desperately need help, but this government is excluding them from the \$250 cheques. Talk about a slap in the face.

Why are the Liberals excluding the most vulnerable people?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the NDP for his question. I hope that he and all MPs will truly help us help Canadians. Our government understands the importance of supporting the most vulnerable. That is what we have been doing since 2015, and we will continue to do so.

Today, we understand that Canada's working men and women need help, and we are going to provide it.

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[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, the NDP leader is giving Canadians whiplash with his latest flip-flop and the flop on the flip. First he said he tore up his deal with the Liberal government. Then he said that he had taped it back together because it had signed on to his two-month tax trick. Now he rises on his feet to say that the trick is a rip off of seniors and persons with disabilities.

Why will the NDP leader not put his actions where his words are and vote for a carbon tax election so Canadians can choose between the two-month trick and axing the tax for good?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It will be of no surprise that I ask the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby to please not take the floor unless recognized by the Speaker.

Oral Questions

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only inconstant flip-flopper of the House is the leader of the official opposition. For months he has been talking about how Canadians need a little more support, but it turns out that unless someone recites robotically his Dr. Seuss rhymes, he is not going to agree with their approach to helping Canadians. Now is the chance for him and his MPs to actually give Canadians some real support. Let us get together and do—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thornhill has the floor.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the streets of a major Canadian city were set on fire this weekend, and the Prime Minister was nowhere to be found. A radical, anti-Semitic, anti-Canadian mob burned cars, smashed windows and assaulted police officers, and the Prime Minister was nowhere to be found. It took him until noon the next day, and he offered the most basic platitudes resembling some standard condemnation that he has been offering after fomenting the hatred he is now surprised about.

I have one question: When was the Prime Minister told about the riot, and why did he decide to keep dancing the night away?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, I think the Minister of defence properly explained the outrage all Canadians felt at the wanton, reckless violence on the streets of Montreal.

We condemn unequivocally the rising and concerning rates of anti-Semitism and all other hate crimes in the country. We are working with provincial authorities and local police to combat them. Let me be very clear: No matter what group one claims to represent or what cause they are advancing, if they are smashing windows and assaulting Canadians, they are a criminal and will face the full consequences of the law.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the member for Calgary Signal Hill to please not to take the floor unless recognized by the Chair.

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the whole world has seen the images of the riots in Montreal. It is shameful. We are reaping what the Prime Minister sowed with his woke, divisive policies. He is dividing people based on their race, gender, religion, region, age, wealth and so on. Because of these policies, we have lost control of our borders.

The government has allowed criminals to come to Canada. The country is in chaos. Why is the Prime Minister dancing while Montreal burns?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I just said.

Our government condemns the violence and criminal acts that we saw in the streets of Montreal in all of our policies. It is completely unacceptable to express a political view by destroying Canadians' property, committing assault and attacking police officers.

These people are not demonstrating peacefully. They are criminals and they will have to face Canadian justice.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for this Prime Minister, it is not enough that Hamas supporters are burning our city centres. He has opened the borders to terrorists and criminals. He called anyone who questioned them racist. Despite the Conservatives constantly urging him to put the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on the list of terrorist entities, he let them operate here legally for years. Now he is letting Hamas supporters destroy our cities.

Why did the Prime Minister choose to go out dancing when he knew Montreal was burning?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP continues to work closely with law enforcement agencies in Montreal, namely the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, which is doing a good job. The RCMP always supports its partners, whether in Montreal, Quebec or other parts of the country.

We have criticized and will continue to criticize the increase in anti-Semitism and hate crimes in Canada. We will continue to work together with the forces of law and order by giving them our support, which is more than the Conservatives can say.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years, the Liberals have engaged in woke virtue signalling. They have promoted a hollow and superficial understanding of morality and are more concerned with appearances than doing what is right. Canadians clearly saw the consequences of Liberal ideology over the weekend in Montreal when hate-fuelled attacks overtook the city. The Prime Minister is partying while Canadian cities are suffering.

Why was the Prime Minister dancing while Montreal was burning?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians in the House and all Canadians around the country detest and render unacceptable what we saw on the streets of Montreal. That kind of violence, unlawful behaviour and anti-Semitism is unacceptable and will never be countenanced.

While we are talking about the fight against anti-Semitism, I will put it to the member that there is legislation on the floor of the chamber that would, with respect to the ban on willful promotion of anti-Semitism, accentuate the penalties, taking them from two to five years.

Oral Questions

Will the member support the bill? It is called Bill C-63 and it targets online radicalisation, which is the root cause of what we are seeing.

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal justice minister, just like his boss, the Prime Minister, refuses to take any responsibility for creating the conditions that led to what we saw in Montreal just a couple of days ago. It is the Liberal justice minister's DEI criminal justice policies that have allowed crime to go unchecked in our cities. It is the Liberal justice minister who will not lift a finger to do anything about the violence targeting religious communities in Canada. The Prime Minister and the Liberal justice minister are the problem.

I ask again, when will the Prime Minister stop dancing and address crime in our cities?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject that out of hand. What I would say on this side of the House is that we are working to ease tensions in our communities. We are looking at the statistics on hate crimes and seeking to address them.

What is the proof positive? When I announced Bill C-63 in the chamber, who was standing by my side? It was people from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. Why is that? They know that a Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue attack does not happen unless people are radicalized online. Radicalization online is causing anti-Semitism. It is what we will combat through the bill and through every measure on this side of the House.

• (1440)

The Speaker: I would like to remind members, including the member for Durham who asked the question, to please not take the floor and to please listen to the answer to his question.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask the finance minister what the Liberals were thinking when they decided to give tax breaks to people who could theoretically be millionaires or give cheques for \$250 to people who earn \$150,000. However, I wonder, were we led down the garden path? Does the government not have the support of the NDP?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that every member of the House will support us. I know that we are divided on certain things, but I think that all of us believe in the importance of supporting the middle class across this country. Yes, I hope the NDP will vote for these measures. I also hope that the Bloc Québécois will vote for them. I hope that our Conservative colleagues will vote for them as well.

SENIORS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister says she wants support from people who care about social justice, which rules out some people in the House. Why do we not finish the discussion on Bill C-319, which is for pensioners? The Liberals themselves voted in favour of it. Why does the minister not tinker with the eligibility rules for the cheques in order to give some to people who really need it, like pensioners, without increasing the overall cost?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the leader of the Bloc Québécois and all members in the House who think that we should help the most vulnerable and seniors. We completely agree. That is why our government significantly increased the support we are giving to the oldest and most vulnerable seniors.

That is the right thing to do and we are doing it.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to FADOQ, the federal government is turning its back on retired people. FADOQ had already denounced the Liberals' refusal to provide equitable OAS to all seniors. Now that organization is furious that they are handing out \$250 cheques to almost anyone earning a taxable income of up to \$150,000 a year, except pensioners. There is not a penny for seniors, not even those who rely on the guaranteed income supplement, which the Liberals promised to increase.

How can the Liberals so blatantly turn their backs on the most vulnerable pensioners after promising to help them? It is shameful.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two points I would like to make.

First, no federal government has done more for seniors than the Liberal government has done since 2015. That is one reason why the poverty rate among seniors has dropped by 20% since 2015.

Second, if we had listened to the Conservatives, who, unfortunately, are often supported by the Bloc, we would not have brought the age of eligibility for old age pensions back down to 65. If we had not done that, right now, 100,000 Canadian seniors and many Quebec seniors would be not just poor, but utterly destitute.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the word “kakistocracy” means “government run by the worst, most incompetent” or “most unscrupulous citizens”. I cannot think of a better description for the NDP-Liberal government. There have been 27 reported cases of scurvy in Saskatchewan and The Salvation Army has reported that over one quarter of parents are skipping meals so their children can eat. Canadians are malnourished and suffering, and what do we get from the government? A quadrupling of the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre.

When will the Prime Minister finally show some courage and call a carbon tax election?

• (1445)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that members would speak to each other in that kind of way.

I believe that within every member's heart, they are here because they wish to serve their communities. The average number of years that Canadians spend in health is six years longer than the United States, two years longer than the United Kingdom and one year longer than France and Italy. We have the second highest only to Japan.

The model Conservatives would choose would push us deeper into ill health and attack our health system. That is not a direction we will follow.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under that Liberal minister, seven million Canadians do not have access to primary care and malnutrition mayhem reigns supreme. Two million Canadians are visiting food banks; 40,000 of them are Nova Scotian and, of those, 12,000 are children. There is scurvy. Can it get any worse? How do the members of the NDP-Liberal reunited costly coalition think they are going to address food bank use and scurvy? Of course, as I mentioned, they want to quadruple the carbon tax.

I will ask again: When will the Prime Minister let Canadians decide if they want the madness to continue, and will the Liberals call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' solution to food insecurity would be to take away a rebate cheque that gives people more money in their pocket to be able to afford the necessities of life. The Conservatives' solution to food insecurity would be to cut a school food program that makes sure that kids get the food they need. The Conservatives would cut dental care.

The reality is that I sat in opposition and I watched the Conservative Party when it was in government. I will say that in that period of time, the amount of action the Conservatives took for vulnerable people was exactly zero. For now, they are talking about what vulnerable people need, but they are not putting forward any solutions to actually help them.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, the cost of living crisis is having a major impact on family grocery budgets and yet the Liberals' answer is to continue hiking the carbon tax, making food even more expensive. Under NDP-Liberals, we are seeing the largest annual increase in child poverty on record. One in four parents are cutting back their food to feed their kids, and one in five children are now living in poverty due to the NDP-Liberal government. That is nearly 1.4 million children. Enough is enough. Will the Prime Minister give Canadians a choice and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the MP for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, and that is why I

Oral Questions

would like to ask her and all of her colleagues, who I believe sincerely do care about Canadian families, to join us in supporting Canadian families. Here is how they can do it: Vote for a GST rebate over the holidays.

That would mean no GST on diapers, no GST on kids' clothes and no GST on that prepared food, maybe a rotisserie chicken that a hard-working mom wants to pick up after work to feed her kids. That is real support we can all deliver in a couple of weeks.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seniors and persons with disabilities are hardest hit by rising costs driven by unchecked corporate greed because they live on fixed incomes and already struggle to pay for medication and groceries and yet, the Liberals excluded them from their planned \$250 rebate. We know Conservatives cut supports Canadians need and these Liberals always let people down. Will the government get real, reverse this cruel and callous decision and ensure seniors and persons with disabilities also get the relief they need?

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current government has done more for seniors than any other government. The first thing that we did was roll back the retirement age from 67 to 65, taking 100,000 seniors out of poverty. We increased the GIS by \$1,000, taking nearly a million seniors out of poverty. We increased the OAS for the most vulnerable seniors and, yes, we are doing a tax break for all Canadians, including seniors. I ask everyone in this House to stand up for seniors and to vote for our tax break for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1450)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have failed to deliver on their \$10-a-day child care by allowing provinces to continue to pay child care workers inadequate wages, causing labour shortages and long wait-lists for families. A recent report by the Centre for Future Work has said that \$10-a-day child care improves affordability for families and has allowed more women to return to work. What is stalling it? The Liberals will not put in place a workforce strategy. Will the government answer people's calls, put in place a workforce strategy and give child care centres and workers the support they need?

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Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since rolling out the Canada-wide early learning and child care system, we have seen over a million children benefit from this affordable care, but, as the member points out, more work needs to be done to ensure that the workforce is well supported. Later this week, I will have the opportunity to meet with all ministers responsible for early learning and child care at the provincial and territorial level, where we will discuss the work that is under way to make sure that early childhood workers are well compensated and well respected.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, our government announced new measures to put more money back in the pockets of Canadians, to help them afford the things they need and save for the things they want. Unfortunately, some on the other side of the aisle have the wrong impression about the measures, like the member of Parliament for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, who described it as “sending people pennies”.

Could the minister please educate the member opposite on what the measures actually mean?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank my colleague for her hard work for her constituents and the people of Canada. We believe that when Canadians need a helping hand, the government should be there. That is why, last week, we announced that we are giving Canadians across the country a tax break. That means that essentials like groceries, snacks, kids' clothing and diapers will be tax-free, and that working Canadians will get some cash back with the working Canadians rebate. This will help Canadians across the country, including Canadians in St. John's East and across the great province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the unserious Prime Minister shakes it off in a vibe session, Montreal burned and the Canadian economy is crippled. This is the guy who does not think about monetary policy. He thinks that budgets balance themselves and that the economy has nothing to do with numbers. He now says that he will let bankers worry about the economy. That is why Canadians are in a GDP-per-person decline over the last two years. That is okay, as long as his banker buddies, the elitists, the rich guys like carbon tax Carney, get paid.

Call a carbon tax election now so that common-sense Conservatives can fix the budget.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would urge the member opposite to take a look at the GDP revisions from StatsCan. Those were revisions upward that showed the real strength of the Canadian economy in our recovery from the COVID recession. I would also like to urge him and everyone in this House to stop talking Canada down. Inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target range

for 10 months. Interest rates have come down four times in a row and we have the lowest debt and deficit in the G7. Now is the time to help Canadians a little bit, and the Conservatives can do that by voting—

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

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer clearly shows the minister's economic illiteracy. GDP per person has gone down. That means that Canadians are getting poorer, and nobody loves the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister more than the U.S. He drove our jobs, our investment and our business to the U.S., and now Canada is poorer than Alabama. That is why more than two million Canadians are in a food bank in a single month, and why one in four Canadians are skipping meals.

Instead of letting bankers worry about the economy, call a carbon tax election now, so common-sense Conservatives can fix the budget and this country.

● (1455)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I really urge the member opposite and all Conservatives to consult those GDP revisions, including their impact on GDP per capita. They will see that we have had a strong economic recovery, with inflation down and interest rates down. That is why now is the time to give Canadians a little bit of extra help with a GST break over the holidays and a rebate for working Canadians. That is what the Conservatives should support us in offering to Canadians. It is really astonishing to me that they refuse to do that.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “let the bankers worry about the economy”, “you'll forgive me if I don't think about monetary policy”, “the budget will balance itself”: these are the actual words of the Prime Minister of Canada. Given his complete disinterest in managing the economy, no one should be surprised that GDP per person has declined in eight of the last nine quarters.

It is time for a common-sense Conservative prime minister who will fix the budget, fight inflation and restore the promise of Canada.

When will the Prime Minister finally give Canadians a say and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a working-class Canadian voting for the Conservatives would be like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders. Members should think about that.

Oral Questions

We want to build an economy that works for everybody. When we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% to cut them for nine million Canadians in the middle class, the Conservatives opposed those measures. When we stopped sending child care cheques to millionaires to put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families, they voted against it. Now, we are proposing to cut taxes on household items, which is going to help families and workers in this country. However, yet again, they oppose it.

I urge my colleague to drop the talking points and get over the stickers in caucus, with whatever the member is about to read, and get on with supporting households.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I urge the member to get on with Canadians' business and call a carbon tax election.

After nine years, according to *The Economist*, Canada is now poorer than Alabama, the fourth-poorest state in the U.S. While the Liberal government drives our economy further and further into the ditch, with excessive taxation and regulation, the Canadian economy falls further behind while the American economy roars ahead.

When will the government get out of the way and allow us to restore the promise of Canada by calling a carbon tax election?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is as though we are playing bingo, with the number of slogans that are being read off, and people cannot take their eyes off the sheet.

This is from a recent article on Conservatives talking about their own leader: "If you repeat the slogans, you get rewarded.... You are celebrated in front of the entire caucus for being a good cheerleader".

The difference between us and them is that I do not have to hold—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Please, let there be no interruptions.

The hon. minister can start from the top.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the difference between the Liberals and Conservatives in question period is that I do not need to have my notes in front of me to actually speak in the House.

The Conservatives are being rewarded in caucus when they repeat their slogans in the House but not when they defend their communities at home. The hon. member will not even admit that his community would be better off receiving money for housing. He stands up and votes against measures once, twice and three times to deny tax breaks to families in his community.

We are going to be here to support working families. I wish that the Conservatives would join us for once.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, *Le Journal de Montréal* asked how Ottawa could hire

43% more employees and still be so bad at serving the public. Despite the government hiring 110,000 public servants, a housing crisis has broken out, immigration is a mess and things are even worse at the Canada Revenue Agency. The answer is that the Liberals spend all their time developing new programs to interfere in health care, housing and more.

Do they realize that they have interfered so much in Quebec's affairs that they have lost control of their own?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Terry Beech (Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk about the vast improvements in government services that have taken place over the last year. We could start with passports. Service improvements have gone across the country. Despite the fact that we were delivering 3.4 million passports two years ago, this year, we are delivering up to 5.7 million passports. We can now get 10-day passports in the territories. There is a new processing centre in B.C., and we will soon be able to get passports online so that we never have to wait in line again.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, *Le Journal de Montréal* did not even reveal the full extent of the federal government's bureaucratic fiasco. While the public service ballooned by 43%, the use of subcontractors also surged. Not only did the government lose control internally, resulting in service disruptions for Canadians, but it also lost control externally, leading to scandals like ArriveCAN. Not once has a single minister been held responsible.

How can a fiasco of this magnitude happen without anyone being held accountable?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the real scandal would of course be if an opposition party like the Conservative Party or the Bloc Québécois had opposed the Canadian dental care plan, because over 13,000 seniors in my colleague's riding have received a Canadian dental care plan card over the past few months, and thousands of them have been able to see a hygienist, dentist and dentist, often for the first time in years.

Sorry, I am mistaken. The Conservatives and the Bloc, unfortunately including my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, did vote against it.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a headline this weekend that said that nothing is working anymore in Ottawa and that the federal government is too big, too fat and too inefficient. We have been saying the same thing for nine years. Unfortunately, this Liberal government has been kept in power by the Bloc Québécois, which supports it and which voted in favour of its excessive spending. It is sad to see Canadians tightening their belts while the “Liberal Bloc” wastes taxpayers' money.

When will the government call an election so that Quebeckers can elect a responsible Conservative government?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about what is sad and what is responsible. It is indeed very sad that our Conservative colleagues from Quebec have been muzzled by their leader. They are not allowed to come visit the hundreds of affordable housing units that we are building in their ridings. They are being hidden by their Conservative leader. That is irresponsible. These MPs are unable to defend their communities because their Conservative leader will not allow them to stand up for the construction of affordable housing in their own ridings.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has once again shown his incompetence.

This government, along with its Bloc Québécois friends, is abusing its power. It is clinging to power despite being a minority government. Its two accomplices voted in favour of a \$500-billion budget that will waste taxpayers' money. More civil servants and fewer services: that is the “Bloc Liberal” coalition. Quebeckers have had enough.

When will there be an election so the people can choose a real Conservative government that will cut red tape and cut taxes? I hope my colleague understands the question.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about incompetence. The Conservative leader built not one, two, three, four or five, but six affordable housing units across the whole country during his entire mandate. That is the definition of incompetence. Today, there are hundreds of affordable housing units being built, including some in our colleague's riding. The bad news is that not only does the Conservative leader say these units do not exist, he also wants to stop them from being built.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the newspaper headlines over the weekend talked about the moral turpitude of a government in decline and said this government is buying itself time on the taxpayer's dime.

The “Liberal Bloc” coalition, which voted twice to keep this government in power, still does not understand that we have to stop feeding the federal bureaucratic beast. The Bloc Québécois also voted for \$500 billion in budgetary appropriations.

Here is a simple question that requires a simple answer: When will an election be held so that Quebeckers can finally choose a common-sense Conservative government?

• (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is my colleague familiar with Guillaume-Couture Boulevard in her riding? Through a housing project on Guillaume-Couture Boulevard, 100 affordable housing units are now being built for seniors. My colleague talks about incompetence. The incompetent one is her Conservative leader, who claims that these affordable housing units, the Unitainés project's 100 affordable housing units for seniors, do not exist. That is what he is saying.

Mayor Lehouillier, Minister Drainville and the Lévis municipal housing office have visited these affordable housing units. When will she ask her Conservative leader to visit them as well?

* * *

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the backbone of our communities. They are bouncing back from tough times and gearing up to make this holiday season a success. Restaurants and small businesses in Vaughan and across Canada are counting on a busy Christmas season to kick-start a strong new year.

Can the Minister of Small Business tell Canadians how our government is helping small businesses and Canadians through the holiday season?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for his tireless advocacy. I am glad to say that, thanks to our government, Canadians across Canada will get a GST tax break from December 14 to February 15. Restaurants Canada indicated, “This is a big win for the restaurant industry.... [It] restores some much-needed hope in the industry and we are optimistic it will translate to increased spending at local restaurants across the country.” This could mean a boost of up to 5%, or close to \$1 billion, in additional revenue. This tax break helps restaurants and small businesses across the country, so let us support local.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg law enforcement community is reeling from a violent incident last night in which an officer was stabbed in the neck. Thankfully, he is in stable condition, but this is the reality faced by our brave police officers every single day. In fact, in Toronto, 637 police officers have been injured on the job just this year alone.

It is no wonder when there has been a 50% rise in violent crime, with 200,000 additional violent crime incidents each year compared to 2015. When are the Liberals going to finally wake up, support our police and do something about this?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what our government does. It supports police doing dangerous and difficult work across the country.

I was briefed on the incident in Winnipeg. I share the hon. member's relief that the officer is expected to recover. These are exactly the kinds of incidents that should make all members of the House support, in a non-partisan way, the important work that police forces do in every corner of the country.

We have reversed Conservative cuts to border services and the RCMP. We support local and provincial police. We will continue to do exactly that.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government often blames the provincial courts, for example, for the crime wave we are seeing across this country. Of course, the provincial courts are governed by the law, and the Liberals changed the law with Bill C-75, which made bail the default for repeat violent offenders.

The results are clear: There has been a 116% increase of gun crime in Canada and a 50% increase of violent crime since 2015 under the Liberals' watch; furthermore, there are 200,000 additional violent crime incidents each year. How many more people are going to have to get hurt before they realize that their policies have caused all this destruction?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of points of clarification.

First of all, bail reform was asked for 18 months ago. We delivered bail reform. Subsequently, we asked provinces, including the member opposite's province, to provide us with data and information. In fact, the province of Manitoba has supplied us with that information. They are working diligently to improve the number of police officers and the number of Crowns, to think about how JPs are trained and to ensure detention facilities are available to receive individuals.

We are not seeing that across the country. We are certainly not seeing that in the province of Ontario. That is where the complementary piece of the administration of justice at the provincial level needs to happen.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, crime is up. Soft-on-crime policies, such as their catch-and-release bail failures, have led to a 50% increase in violent crime. Last night, a police officer in Winnipeg was stabbed in the throat; thankfully, that officer is in stable condition.

However, this situation should never have happened in the first place. The Liberal hug-a-thug approach to crime is making an already dangerous job increasingly unsafe and more challenging. How many more police officers and victims must suffer before the Liberals start prioritizing public safety?

• (1510)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my support for

Oral Questions

what the Winnipeg police officers do and what every police officer does around this country to keep all of our communities safe. That is the first point.

The second point that I want to reiterate is that we are actually seeing declining numbers of law enforcement officers in municipalities right around the country. I can speak most directly to my own town of Toronto. There are currently 700 fewer officers on the beat in Toronto than there were when the Minister of Defence was the chief of police.

We need to ensure that municipalities and provinces are stepping up to complement the work we are doing with the Criminal Code to keep our communities safe. That means officers, Crowns, JPs and detention facilities.

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FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, school food programs are growing in Ontario. With our new agreement with the Ontario government, the national school food program will now support kids in Newmarket—Aurora and across Ontario with healthy meals, building a foundation for their well-being and success.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development share how this program is helping families save money and make sure that kids receive nutritious meals?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great news. Last week, Ontario signed on. This school year, more than 160,000 kids will receive food at school here in Ontario thanks to the national school food program.

This will save an average family of four about \$800 in groceries. The president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association said that "this funding will have a tremendous impact on school communities and family budgets".

We are helping kids in school, while the Conservatives would cut this—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every day it is more clear that the Liberals' air passenger regulations are letting people down. Now we learn the Canadian Transportation Agency is creeping around online forums trying to catch air passengers who are sharing their experiences.

Routine Proceedings

On the one side, we have the rich airlines backed by the best lawyers and lobbyists. On the other side, Canadian families are struggling to navigate the government's botched complaint process.

Will the minister immediately stop government online surveillance of Canadian air passengers?

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government was the first to protect the rights of passengers, starting in 2019. The air passenger protection regulations are there to protect passengers and their families. We expect all airlines to follow these rules.

We are going to be relentless in working with the airlines to ensure, once again, that they are looking after their passengers as well as the families of those passengers.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, with \$4.7 billion, the government could have cut chronic homelessness across the country in half and had \$1.2 billion to spare. Instead, it wants to throw it at a pre-election vote-buying scheme right out of Doug Ford's playbook. Worst of all, like always, people with disabilities unable to work and already living in poverty are left out entirely.

Do people with disabilities mean so little to the government that it is not even trying to buy their votes anymore?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no other government has done more to support seniors and persons with disabilities than this Liberal government, whether it is through a dental care program that is going to help nine million Canadians, or the Canada disability benefit or by increasing seniors' pensions. The GST-HST tax break is yet another measure to support Canadian families. Our working Canadians rebate is going to support more than 18 million working Canadians who get that \$250 cheque in April. This is good news. Let us get it done.

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[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the 2024 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Impact Award winners.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1515)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today will be an interesting day. Pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages,

the government's response to 14 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we pause to reflect on the devastating issue of gender-based violence and its impact on individuals, families and communities right across Canada.

Everyone deserves to live free from violence, yet many people across the country experience it every single day because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity or how others perceive them. This is more than a violation of human rights; it is a painful reality that no one should have to face.

While anyone can become a victim of gender-based violence, data shows the most vulnerable groups include indigenous women and girls; Black and racialized women; immigrant and refugee women; 2SLGBTQI+ people; women with disabilities; and women living in northern, rural and remote communities.

Gender-based violence has had devastating impacts on individuals for far too long, hurting not just individuals but families and entire communities in Canada. For instance, 44% of women in Canada have experienced intimate partner violence at least once since the age of 15. In 2023, 187 women and girls in Canada were victims of gender-related homicide; that is one woman every two days. These are more than statistics; these are real women, women in our community, our colleagues, our sisters, mothers, daughters, each one deserving of justice and a life free from violence.

In recognition of this, we launched the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, commemorating 33 years of dedicated efforts to end gender-based violence in all its forms.

The 16 days of activism against gender-based violence was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. Since then, the campaign has called on all Canadians to recognize and call out violence when they see it, to speak up and take action against it. However, there is still so much work ahead of us.

Today, we stand in solidarity with victims and survivors of gender-based violence and their families, and we commit to doing better.

Routine Proceedings

In response, our government launched the federal, provincial and territorial national action plan to end gender-based violence in 2022. This 10-year plan is backed by a \$525 million investment to support provinces and territories in addressing this critical issue. Agreements are in place with each province and territory to help them tackle their specific challenges and priorities, based on the five key areas of the national action plan.

Later this year, the first annual national progress report will be published. It will demonstrate the impacts that these investments have made under the national action plan to end gender-based violence.

In 2017, the Government of Canada launched “It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence.” Since its launch, the government has invested more than \$800 million and \$44 million annually for the following years. This includes \$55 million for indigenous women and 2SLGBTQI+ organizations to offer gender-based violence prevention programs and \$30 million for crisis hotlines to help manage the increased call volumes during the pandemic and prevent further escalation of gender-based violence.

Collaboration in the fight against gender-based violence goes beyond any single department or organization; it calls on all of us to step up.

This year, Indigenous Services Canada worked in collaboration with indigenous peoples and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to commit funding for the construction and operation of 19 emergency shelters and 16 transitional homes across Canada.

Justice Canada is supporting survivors by strengthening Canada's bail regime to better address intimate partner violence and by improving the law on publication bans.

Public Safety is strengthening Canada's response to human trafficking through the renewal of the national strategy to combat human trafficking.

The onus to fight gender-based violence cannot just fall on one government or one department. We are taking a holistic whole-of-government approach to address this issue. It is on all of us to prevent gender-based violence from happening.

That is why this year's theme for the 16 days of activism is “Come Together, Act Now”. It highlights how crucial everyone's involvement is in changing the social norms, attitudes and behaviours that contribute to gender-based violence. True change is only possible when we unite. That is why coming together and acting now is so important. It is not just about today, but about creating generational change that will last for years to come.

● (1520)

It is only possible by continuing to work across all levels of government and with community organizations that will take real action and tackle gender-based violence at its core. We owe it to every victim and survivor to bring them justice, to speak up and take action against gender-based violence in all its forms.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one woman or girl is killed every single day in our country. That is inexcusable.

We just heard the minister deliver a speech in the House praising her government's efforts to combat gender-based violence. I cannot believe that the minister would have the audacity to deliver this speech after all the things the Prime Minister has done to harm women and make life more dangerous for women and girls. The Liberals must make new ministers check in their shame when they get sworn into cabinet.

The Prime Minister has deliberately implemented a criminals' first agenda, which has directly led to a dramatic increase in violence against women. Despite the desperate pleas from already marginalized voices of women, survivors, victims and their families, he just doubles down. In his ideological pursuit of progressive catchphrases and clout chasing from international organizations in Strasbourg and Brussels, the Prime Minister has caused the meteoric rise of the epidemic that is gender-based violence through policies that place rapists and murderers above victims and survivors.

It is no coincidence that before the Liberals took office in 2015, rates of police-reported family violence and intimate partner violence was on the decline. Under the Liberals government, there have been alarmingly higher rates. This is verified by the government's own data.

Since the Prime Minister's famous “It's 2015” quip on the steps of Rideau Hall, where he touted that his would be a feminist government, the rate of female victimization for intimate partner violence has increased by 18.75%. Now, in 2024, total sexual assaults have increased by 74%; total sexual violations against children, up 118%; forcible confinement or kidnapping, up 10%; indecent harassing communication, up 86%; and trafficking in persons, up 83%.

In addition, Liberal Bill C-5 repealed the previous Conservative government's ban on house arrest for the following offences: section 144, prison breach; section 264, criminal harassment; and section 271, sexual assault. The list goes on.

The Liberal Prime Minister is a fake feminist. The government needs to own it, admit its failures and let the law enforcement agencies enforce laws and put the scum of society behind bars. The government brought in legislation that repealed mandatory minimum sentences for gun-related offences and removed the former Harper government's ban on house arrest for rapists, kidnappers and human traffickers, allowing them to be put back on the streets to re-terrorize and revictimize the very people we are supposed to protect.

Routine Proceedings

The Prime Minister has not only been an architect of a systemic coddling of violent criminals through his own legislation, he has instructed his caucus in both the Liberal and NDP to vote down common-sense legislation like Bill C-325, which would have reversed its own short-sighted decision to put literal rapists and traffickers behind a TV instead of behind bars.

It is not just the Prime Minister's soft-on-crime approach that has hurt women. Canadian women are bearing the brunt of the Prime Minister's poor economic and fiscal decisions. Canadian families paid \$700 more for groceries this year than they did last year. The carbon tax is driving up the cost of goods and services, disproportionately affecting women and children. One in five children are now living in poverty. There have been two million visits to a food bank in a single month.

Activism alone will not stop intimate partner violence and gender-based violence. We need strong leaders who will fix the broken bail systems, keep dangerous and violent offenders away from their victims and work with the provinces to fix the backlogged justice system instead of blaming them for a system that the federal government helped create.

The refusal of the Prime Minister to take legitimate action against gender-based violence can charitably be interpreted in only two ways: Either the Prime Minister does not know how bad the situation is or he does know and he does not care. Neither is acceptable and shows a complete dereliction of compassion and responsibility for our most vulnerable.

For the Prime Minister to act like this, for the minister to stand in the House and suggest otherwise is nonsense and disrespectful to survivors, victims and their families. It was not like this before he was elected and it will not be like this after he is gone. Canada is done with the woke, fake, feminist Prime Minister. He should call an election.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the House of Commons started sitting at 11 a.m., as it does every Monday. Every Monday at 11 a.m., the Speaker of the House leaves his office and walks in a solemn parade to open the House so we can start the week's work. It is currently 3:30 p.m. The House has been open for four and a half hours now. That is not very long, but it was enough time for the Conservatives to paralyze the work of the House a little bit longer, for oral question period and for a ministerial statement. In this short amount of time, four and a half hours, 28 women were killed by a loved one, a partner or a family member. Somewhere in the world, 28 women have been killed since we started sitting at 11 o'clock this morning. It is like this all the time: an endless tally of murdered women.

That is civilization in 2024.

We are talking about flights to Mars, artificial intelligence and self-driving cars, and yet we cannot put an end to violence. Women are being bombed to death in Mariupol and Gaza. They are being killed on the streets of Bucha, raped, tortured and murdered on kibbutzim or taken hostage. These women are the spoils of war, the

primary civilian victims of the atrocities committed during these international conflicts.

Is that what civilization looks like in 2024? Is that humanity?

Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we can only conclude that, sadly, we are still a long way from our goal of ending femicide and all forms of violence against women. Female circumcision still occurs here in Canada. Sophia Koukou's report on female genital mutilation and cutting in Canada speaks for itself. Her report includes the account of a 37-year-old woman who said:

There are also people who want to practice [female genital mutilation and cutting] here in Canada. It's something we don't talk about, but that's the reality.... One woman told me "you know, my husband sent the daughters to Africa. They were circumcised." We don't talk about it, but a lot of girls here aren't protected.

In Quebec, in 2023, *La Presse* ran a story about a young girl in day care who was the victim of circumcision, and there is every reason to believe that this was not an isolated incident. No one talks about it. No one talks about honour-based violence or forced marriage, and no one talks about human trafficking in this country or about forced prostitution. Silence is more comfortable. This issue is being swept under the rug.

We have a collective responsibility to stop gender-based violence. I repeat: It is a collective responsibility. This is not a battle that women should have to fight alone. It has to be everyone's responsibility. We are not fighting separate battles. Women need men. Men need women. It has to be a vast global effort.

If we can send people into space and compose new Beatles songs using AI, then we should be able to work together to put a stop to violence.

In order to accomplish that, we have to be able to talk to each other. Here at home, we are seeing a rise in masculinists, so-called alpha males. The number of men who think like Andrew Tate is growing, and our young men, even our young boys, are being radicalized. We cannot stop that if we do not communicate.

Rather than judge each other, we need to talk to each other, listen to each other, and engage in dialogue. We need to explain our points of view. In an egalitarian society like ours, there is nothing normal about reverting to male domination and female submission. We need to fix this, but we have to do so in good faith.

It can start here. Can members stop accusing everyone who wants tighter gun control of going after hunters? We all know that it is nonsense, but once again, partisanship takes precedence over the common good. We have to stop that. We need to talk to each other and genuinely look for ways to end all forms of violence against women, because while the parties here stubbornly argue and play partisan politics, the death toll keeps rising.

• (1530)

I cannot help but think about the fact that, during my brief speech, a woman just died somewhere in the world at the hands of a loved one.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we rise on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women's 16 days of action. I honour all survivors of gender-based violence and frontline advocates, who know all too well the urgency of ending this ongoing crisis. Violence against women, girls and gender-diverse people is reprehensible, is shameful and remains all too common today.

As experts point out, gender-based violence is an epidemic in our country. As many as 44% of women who have been in an intimate relationship have experienced some form of intimate partner violence. During this year alone, at least 137 women and girls were killed because of their gender. This violence disproportionately impacts young women and girls, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, BIPOC folks, indigenous women and the disability community, and let us not forget the rising hate against trans women in this country. Indigenous women and gender-diverse people are more likely to experience intimate partner violence, intimate partner homicide, sexual assault and harassment. Among transgender and gender-diverse people, the rate of violence experienced is as high as 59%.

We need to go beyond partisanship and not use tit-for-tat arguments when we are talking about ending gender-based violence. Political games are resulting in the lives of so many across Canada. We must work together, across party lines, in unity to end the crisis of gender-based violence. This is not a partisan issue; it is a human rights issue that all parties and all levels of government need to come together to meaningfully address.

When it comes to possible solutions to this epidemic, we are not in the dark. Through the hard work of survivors, family members, advocates and researchers, several reports and publications have laid out concrete steps that all leaders, all civil society in fact, can take to stop gender-based violence. This includes the 231 calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Mass Casualty Commission report and the Renfrew County inquest, to name just a few. We have the research for what is needed.

What we need is real political will and accountability mechanisms to ensure governments commit to solutions and do not marginalize the safety of women, girls and gender-diverse people any longer. We need accountability. For example, it is worth noting that while the national inquiry tabled its final report in 2019, in 2024 the Assembly of First Nations found that only two of the 231 calls for justice had been fully implemented, something that National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak called “unacceptable”. This is why it is so important to fulfill call for justice 1.7: create a national indigenous and human rights ombudsperson and establish a national indigenous and human rights tribunal. It is for similar reasons that women's groups are calling for the establishment of an independent gender-based violence commissioner to halt this epidemic.

We cannot stand by and hope leaders fulfill their obligations to end gender-based violence without being held accountable. We cannot accept any more empty gestures while lives are at risk and women, girls and gender-diverse people continue to die. Conse-

quences of not addressing the crisis are not worth any more suffering. We need real results because we know what the consequence will be if there is no action.

• (1535)

We have seen an alarming rise of dangerous misogynistic hate among extremist groups, producing the same type of rhetoric that inspired the mass femicide at École Polytechnique in 1989. We have also experienced a growth in hateful anti-immigration, which leaders are now capitulating to, when we know newcomers and refugees are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This type of hate has no place in our society and it is critical that every leader take part in condemning and combatting it to prevent violent tragedies from occurring. We need far-reaching solutions for a far-reaching crisis, but beyond this, ending this epidemic means providing material support to combat violence. It is essential that we appreciate the weight of this epidemic and that we do not settle for half measures taken out of convenience.

According to a recent report by Women's Shelters Canada, over the past year, women have increasingly been forced to leave shelter spaces and been placed in positions of housing insecurity, often being compelled to move back in with an abusive partner. Seriously addressing violence means expanding shelter spaces and building affordable housing with rent geared to income so survivors of violence have safe living spaces to inhabit when they leave abusers. It means supporting the national inquiry's call for justice 4.5, a guaranteed livable basic income to ensure women and girls and gender-diverse people are economically secure and are not vulnerable to economic abuse. It means providing long-term, sustainable funding to frontline women's organizations that are best placed to alleviate violence. An epidemic as widespread as this one requires far-reaching responses.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I call on all my colleagues to join the fight to ensure that everybody enjoys the right to safety and freedom from violence.

• (1540)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I request unanimous consent, as the only woman leader in the House of Commons, for the opportunity to join in the round of ministerial speeches on this day to end violence against women and gender-based violence.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues in the House of Commons, because it is a great honour to rise today.

The members who have spoken today are women. I want to thank our minister, as well as the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington, the member for Shefford and the member for Winnipeg Centre.

It is an honour to work in this place with members who are also feminists and who always stand up for women's rights, but also boys' and men's rights.

[English]

We as a society are recognizing that violence, and hatred that breeds violence, has no place in our society, yet it is taking root in ways we could not have imagined.

[Translation]

Today is the day for the elimination of violence, but it is the first of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, which run from November 25 to December 10.

It may be coincidental, but the anniversary of the terrible tragedy at École Polytechnique also falls within those days.

[English]

December 6 falls in the midst of 16 days of activism, which is a global movement to act together against violence against women. We know, as we stand every year to condemn violence against women, that not a single party or partisan in this place would not agree that we must end violence against women. I know everyone in this place stands together on that. We have very strong recommendations from the Mass Casualty Commission on the biggest single mass murder in this country, which took place in Portapique, Nova Scotia, and its environs. It called out intimate partner violence as one of the roots of the violence that spread to kill many others who had nothing to do in an intimate way with the killer, except that he ended their lives. Intimate partner violence is on the rise and we see it.

We also see the recommendations and calls for justice for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and the two-spirit plus community. The recommendations of that inquiry are not yet implemented. We see it every single day. In the time since August 15, 2021, we have seen the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban, shift to declaring war on its own women. They run in fear, not allowed to go to school, not allowed to show themselves, not allowed to serve as members of Parliament.

I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for particularly mentioning the violence against trans women, the increased hate, and the online social media algorithms that spike rage-farming against women, trans women and indigenous women. We end up feeling less safe now than we were 15 to 20 years ago. We now feel more victimized, more targeted than ever before. It is not political; it is a cultural and global phenomenon. We saw it in the U.S. election. We must not see it take root in Canada.

I thank my colleagues, particularly colleagues in the Conservative Party, for giving me unanimous consent. I was not sure I would have it until the moment I stood. I thank them from the bottom of my heart, because we need to stand unanimously in this place without partisanship to say we stand together and act together. We need to see better training in our police forces. We need to see more action to follow through on all the calls for justice for indigenous women and girls. That means immediate help after a violent assault, immediate support for victims of sexual violence and immediate support for the bill before us now to end the coercive control of women and girls in their own homes. We are united.

● (1545)

[Translation]

Today we all stand together, as women, as members of Parliament, as Canadian men and women, to protect the rights of women, the rights of our daughters and granddaughters.

[English]

I thank all my colleagues.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I thank all members for participating in this very important debate.

[English]

I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 29 minutes.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, which is in relation to the motion adopted on Thursday, November 21, regarding the appearance of the member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 37th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented on Friday, March 22, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time.

I think colleagues know about my general fondness for poetry, so as I move this motion with respect to Liberal corruption and double-dipping, I thought I might elevate the conversation by briefly reflecting in verse on last week's events:

He sought to increase his fee
By pretending that he was Cree
What an obscene joke
Shared an address with coke
Wait, not Cree, but Métis

Routine Proceedings

What a corrupt and insane notion
 He sure caused quite a commotion
 Edmonton Centre is fired
 Calgary Skyview may be hired
 Could we see a porch pirate promotion?

For his false indigenous boast
 The minister now is toast
 Texts regarding the other Randy
 Now that sure was handy
 Calgary eyes a minister for Canada post

Will this scandal cause a prime ministerial shift?
 Or will he just run off to watch Taylor Swift?
 We need a new direction
 And a carbon tax election
 To end this corruption and grift.

It is great to see colleagues from all parties applauding that verse.

We are debating concurrence with respect to the 37th report of the public accounts committee, a very short report that puts forward a very simple proposition. It says, “That the committee report to the House that it calls on the government to prohibit any government employee from simultaneously working as an external contractor.”

It is really incredible that this even needs to be discussed, because the whole point of contracting out work is that the expertise or the ability to do the work does not exist within the public service. Conceptually, the argument is that if we do not have someone inside of the public service who can do a particular job, maybe there is a case for contracting out to an external company to do the work. Maybe there is some logic to that. However, we found that there are cases where the public service is contracting out to somebody who is also a public servant, which is incredible. The government will say it does not have expertise internally, so it goes outside of government to contract with an external company, and that company is owned and operated by someone who is inside the public service. It obviously makes no sense.

We found out that David Yeo, benefiting from the arrive scam scandal contracts, was, according to his LinkedIn page, simultaneously a government employee and a government contractor. We asked him at committee how it was that, according to his LinkedIn page, which is not exactly a private source so someone could have checked it, he was simultaneously a government employee and an external contractor, and that this did not line up with the timelines that he presented to the committee. He said that LinkedIn was not an authoritative source, except that it was his own LinkedIn page, which he controls. We therefore had this contractor and government employee telling us we could not really believe the things he wrote on his own LinkedIn page.

It was in the context of testimony from David Yeo at the public accounts committee and revelations by public servants that we heard this is actually allowed. According to the rules of the Liberal government, someone can simultaneously be an outside contractor and a government employee. I put forward what I think was a common-sense motion to say that the committee report to the House that it calls on the government to prohibit this. There is no need to contract out the work if there is somebody inside of government who can already do that work. Opposition parties do not always agree, of course, but all three opposition parties thought this was common sense. However, the Liberal members on the public ac-

counts committee voted against the motion. They said, “Wait a second; we are not so sure now”, and they voted against it.

Now will be the chance for all members of the Liberal caucus to vote on double-dipping. Should we allow people who are government employees to simultaneously be outside contractors to the government, or should we end this practice so that we are contracting out as little as possible? Certainly, we should not be contracting out to people who are already in. This absurd practice of double-dipping should end. That is why we put forward this motion. It has the support of a majority of the House, and I hope to see it pass today. We will see how the Liberals vote when they have the chance.

• (1550)

We found more recently that double-dipping is not just a phenomenon that involves lower-level folks. These are still insiders in a substantial sense, but are at a lower level within the pecking order, folks like David Yeo. We also found out that the former minister of employment, the member for Edmonton Centre, not only had double identities, but was involved in double-dipping. He owned a company that was bidding on contracts with the federal government while also being a minister in the government. He has a company, Global Health Imports, that according to text messages he was directing while in cabinet. He was a minister of the Crown, and he owned and directed a company that was bidding on work from the government that he was a part of. He was making a generous salary from the taxpayer as a cabinet minister and was also double-dipping through this pandemic profiteering company.

This is a company, as members will recall, that falsely claimed to be indigenous-owned. The former minister himself made all kinds of contradictory claims, finally admitting that it was not true that he had any kind of indigenous identity. However, in the process, the Liberal Party claimed that he was indigenous, and his company claimed to be indigenous-owned based on claims he had made and claims the Liberal Party had made on his behalf. This false information was put forward to try to allow this company, owned by a minister of the Crown, to double-dip and benefit from contracts that came from the government. It is really unbelievable the extent to which the former minister went in misrepresenting his identity and to which the Liberal Party supported him by misrepresenting his identity, and he has continued to benefit from his ownership of Global Health Imports.

It is important to emphasize for the House that this scandal is not over. The minister has now left cabinet and has said that he would like the opportunity to defend himself and respond to the allegations. That is great. I think he should have the opportunity to come to committee and testify and answer important questions, because we certainly need to get to the bottom of what happened here. However, the company he owns is still eligible for government contracts in spite of the fact that we now know, as the minister has admitted, that the claims made by Global Health Imports that it was Indigenous-owned were totally false. Despite knowing that this was an instance of indigenous identity fraud, that company continues to be eligible to bid for government contracts.

Routine Proceedings

It is, frankly, disgusting that the Liberal government does not take the growing problem of indigenous identity fraud seriously. It is very serious, and does not just apply to procurement. Having engaged with many indigenous leaders on this issue over the last few months, I know there is a broad-based concern about indigenous identity fraud. People who are not indigenous, often elite insiders seeking more power and benefit for themselves, pretend to be indigenous in order to gain some kind of advantage. It could be access to academic opportunities, access to platforms and recognition, or any number of things. In this case, we are talking about access to government procurement, which are opportunities that were supposed to be aside for indigenous entrepreneurs. However, now we have people pretending to be indigenous who are not indigenous trying to steal those opportunities. The minister's company did this.

Although the minister is out of cabinet, he remains a member of the Liberal caucus and his company continues to be eligible for these contracts, so the double-dipping persists. It is time to end double-dipping, end the corrupt grift that has gone on under the government and stop the member for Edmonton Centre's company Global Health Imports from double-dipping and bidding on government contracts. It is time to have a new government that stands for the interests of everyday Canadians.

• (1555)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague outlining, through this motion, that the government “prohibit any government employee from simultaneously working as an external contractor.” That completely makes sense. It is logical. This should have been happening years ago. It should have been happening under the Harper government.

My concerns around outsourcing are serious, and I have raised them many times at the government operations committee. We have seen companies such as Deloitte receive \$11 million when the Harper government took over its majority back in 2011, and that tripled to \$38 million. Now it is over \$200 million. Can members guess who sits as managing directors of Deloitte? It is former Conservative justice minister Peter MacKay and former Liberal cabinet minister Pierre Pettigrew.

We need to stop all of this outsourcing to former politicians, as well as to former employees leaving the federal government service. Does my colleague not agree?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, this motion is about policies that allow outsourcing to people who are inside the house. It obviously does not make sense to allow outsourcing to people who are already inside the house.

It sounds to me like the NDP members are saying that they would oppose any instance whatsoever of the government using outside contractors. We have said that there has been a significant growth in spending within the public service and there has also been a significant increase in outside contractors. There are people hired to hire other people, and there are instances of people being brought in to provide strategic advice, such as those at McKinsey, which should be provided by those within the public service.

We think we can cut down on the abuse of this outsourcing, and there are obvious instances of corruption, the misuse of this, that

can clearly be eliminated. That is what we have committed to tackle right away.

• (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member brought forward a motion of concurrence and spent most of his time talking about a completely different incident. It is interesting in the sense that we have been witnessing, for the last four or five weeks now, a multi-million dollar game being played by the Conservatives, at a great expense to Canadians.

The member once again, and I suspect he might have the record for the most motions for concurrence of a report being brought before the chamber, continues to use this as a mechanism to filibuster and prevent substantive legislation and other issues to come before the House. I am wondering if he could indicate to members how he justifies this self-serving, Conservative leader-driven policy that Conservatives have of abusing the chamber.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member suggests I may have the record for moving the most reports for concurrence of any member. I want to thank him very much for those kind words. It is very gracious of him to acknowledge my work in that regard. I am very proud of having had the opportunity to put important motions on substantive policy issues before the House.

In this particular case, I spent my entire speech talking about the issue, which is double-dipping. We could end this right now. The government could commit to ending all double-dipping. The government also does not seem to like the debate over the privilege issue. We could end that right away if it would just agree to hand over the documents.

This is a minority Parliament. If we have a majority of the House wanting to see something, ordering the government to do something, the majority of the House should have its way. When the majority of the House says that it wants to see the documents, those documents need to be handed over. When we have the majority of the House saying that the government should end this double-dipping, the government should comply with that.

We end up with a deadlock in the House when the government, which is representing a minority of the seats, and a very small minority in public opinion, nonetheless insists on defying the wishes of the House and of the people of Canada. That is where we are right now, and the member needs to reflect on how his government is refusing to listen to Parliament and the people. If it did listen to Parliament and the people, if it ended double-dipping and handed over the documents that were ordered, then it would be a straightforward matter of proceeding on to the next order of business.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when my flight was landing last night, at about 10 o'clock, I got a text from our party saying it wanted me to speak on a concurrence debate. I said, "Which debate?" It said, "The scandal", so of course my first reaction was, "What scandal?"

Was it the green slush fund scandal, where the government was funnelling \$400 million to Liberal insiders, and where board members and executives admitted they purposely ignored conflict of interest issues? Today in public accounts, we had the vice-president from SDTC, and she is also on the executive of the SDTC. She stated she knew about the conflicts, but that it was not her job to do anything about them. She knew for years about the conflicts, but she stated that they were someone else's job to deal with. Then, the Liberals moved a motion to kill the study. Before we could even debate the motion, they moved a further motion to move the debate in camera, so they could hide their closure motion and the debate from Canadians.

Here we have a privilege debate that has been tying up Parliament for eight weeks now. The Liberals are trying to kill the study as well. We also found out that this would stop the industry minister and the environment minister from appearing before the public accounts committee on the green slush fund, even though they had been called months ago to attend. They are both refusing.

Of course, the environment minister, as we are aware, owned shares of a company called Cycle Capital, one of the companies that his friend, who is a founder and co-owner, used to bilk taxpayers for millions and millions of dollars, despite having a clear conflict of interest. However, that was okay because the minister's partner said that she and the minister only benefited a little from the corruption. It was only several hundred dollars.

I want to read from the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act. It states in subsection 12(2) that "no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities."

Here we have the minister of environment's partner violating the act itself, and the Liberals voted to shut down the motion. The minister of environment and his partners stuff their pockets with taxpayers' money, and the Liberals moved to stop the investigation, but it turns out that was not the scandal we wanted to talk about today.

I wondered if it was the sister scandal of the green slush fund, the net-zero accelerator, where the government gave \$8 billion to corporations it turns out were not eligible. Canadian dollars actually went to a company that produces cars with Uyghur slave labour. This company has also been named as a war sponsor for Putin's war against Ukraine for supporting Russian finances, but the government gave money to it through the net-zero accelerator. I have great news for Canadians: They are subsidizing Putin's war against Russia thanks to the government.

We also found out that a company receiving money from the net-zero accelerator is being sued right now because it was using the money to pay off ISIS. Canadian taxpayers' money is going to a multi-billion dollar international company that is diverting the money to ISIS so it can operate in Syria. However, it was not that scandal.

Perhaps it is the "other Randy" scandal, where the former minister of employment continued to do business with shady business partners while in cabinet when, of course, the rules say he cannot. Of course, he denied that and blamed the other Randy, perhaps the same other Randy who claimed indigenous status to bid on government business contracts and the same other Randy whose business shared an address with someone who was tied up in cocaine trafficking. Stephen Anderson, the other Randy's partner, is probably somewhere out there expressing extreme disappointment in his choice of business partners, but it was not that scandal either.

● (1605)

The scandal I was being asked to speak to, of course, was ArriveCAN, where the Liberal government paid millions to well-connected shady middlemen for nothing, to do no work, for an app that did not work. It was an \$80,000 app that ballooned to about \$60 million, and we do not know how much more. The Auditor General cannot even track how much because of the poor record-keeping. For this app, the government paid GC Strategies, a well-connected duo, \$15 million to merely outsource the work to other consultants.

What was the Liberal reaction when we first brought up this egregious use of taxpayers' money? We had the government claiming that we were vaccine deniers if we thought ArriveCAN was a waste of money. There was nothing about the warnings of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money going out the door, nothing about the shoddy oversight and nothing about companies writing their own requirements for sole source contracts to be given to them. No, if we were disagreeing with any of it, we were anti-vaxxers.

Apparently, the Auditor General, to the government, is an anti-vaxxer. If we were concerned, of course, about cost overruns, insiders getting rich and an app that sent 10,000 people into quarantine in error, yes, we were vaccine deniers. The app error that sent the 10,000 people, by the way, was not even checked to see if it was working correctly before it was released by the government. In committee, CBSA admitted that it did not even check the update to see if it worked before sending all those people in.

When people got angry and started confronting the government about this, it changed its mind. It was no longer calling us a vaccine denier if we had a problem with ArriveCAN. It was that ArriveCAN was saving lives.

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The member for Mount Royal said, “Madam Speaker, we will not apologize for an app that saved lives. [It] was put in place at the beginning of [COVID].” We had the member for Oakville North—Burlington say that it saved lives. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence, when he was minister, said that it saved thousands of lives. We put this question to the Public Health Agency, and they came back and said that, actually, it did not save lives, but it helped it keep track of paperwork.

What is amazing, after all of this, is that the government gave an award to CBSA for purchasing. They gave them an unsung hero award, which was awarded to the procurement team for the purchase and development of ArriveCAN. The Liberal government would give an unsung hero award to the iceberg that sank the Titanic or perhaps to Andersen Consulting for their great work on Enron.

On the report itself, I want to read a few things. This is the from the “At a Glance” section of the report of the Auditor General on ArriveCAN:

Overall, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Public Services and Procurement Canada repeatedly failed to follow good management practices in the contracting, development, and implementation...

The Canada Border Services Agency’s documentation, financial records, and controls were so poor that we were unable to determine the precise cost of the ArriveCAN application.

These were three of the largest departments managing this. Members can think about that. We think it is \$60 million, but it could be a lot more. The Auditor General, even with all of her resources, cannot determine, because of the mess of the government, how much was spent and wasted.

The [CBSA]’s disregard for policies, controls, and transparency in the contracting process restricted opportunities for competition and undermined value for money...

We also found deficiencies in how the [CBSA] managed the contracts [and a lack of concern] about value for money.

Further, it says:

...we are concerned that essential information, such as clear deliverables and required qualifications, was missing. We found that details about the work performed were often missing on invoices and supporting time sheets submitted....

This gets to the root of ArriveCAN, but also of the green slush fund and all the other scandals. Taxpayers are being defrauded. The Auditor General stated very clearly. The evidence has stated as such and we heard as much in committee. It is time for the government to come clean.

• (1610)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have noticed that over the last number of weeks, Conservatives like to talk about scandals. They have come up with a number of different types of them. However, what they always avoid talking about is the record of their own leader of the Conservative Party, when he in fact sat around the cabinet table, directly involved in scandals himself, let alone being in contempt of Parliament. There are so many other things.

There is a booklet I often refer to, *Stephen Harper; Serial Abuser of Power*. It talks of scandals, corruption and abuse of power. It does not even have the ETS scandal in it. It is a pretty good-sized book, with lots of pages.

Would my colleague across the way not agree that behaviour from the past is a good way to reflect on what the leader of the Conservative Party would really be like if he were Prime Minister, given the number of scandals he was directly involved in, such as trying to prevent people from being able to vote?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the behaviour of the present. There is the green slush fund, where \$400 million of taxpayers’ money went to Liberal-connected insiders. There is the Minister of Environment, a co-owner of one of the largest recipients of the slush fund. His partner stated to committee that it was okay because they barely defrauded taxpayers of anything. The member opposite should confront the issues of today and fix these issues instead of squandering his time in the House, floundering and looking to blame others in the past.

• (1615)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the whole thing has been a gravy train for Liberal and Conservatives insiders, and not just insiders. I highlighted earlier that Peter MacKay, a former Conservative cabinet minister, and Pierre Pettigrew, a former Liberal cabinet minister, are sitting as managing directors at Deloitte, which has gotten over \$1.2 billion from the government.

The issue skyrocketed under the Conservatives. In fact, outsourcing doubled under the Harper government and has quadrupled under the Liberal government. Former staff, the former president of the CBSA, moved across, finished his time serving the Canadian public and went to work for PricewaterhouseCoopers. It went from \$32 million in outsourcing to \$115 million in one year. It has to stop.

I have had the fortune to work with my colleague, chair of the government operations committee. The NDP has been wanting Deloitte in front of that committee because of the gross amount of money, \$275 million, in government outsourcing a year. It was \$11 million in 2015. However, the Conservatives and the Liberals have teamed up, and they blocked the government operations committee from bringing in Deloitte to testify about what is happening, who is involved, why the out-of-control outsourcing is happening and why Canadian taxpayers are being milked in this way.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my time with my colleague on the government operations committee, the mighty OGGO. He brings up a lot of valid points.

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We are not blocking Deloitte; we are just seized with other scandals at the moment. Perhaps if he would stop supporting a Liberal government that stumbles from scandal to scandal and would vote with us to bring it down, then we could get back to the business of fixing the government.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the member for Edmonton Centre. Unfortunately his business is still active on the list. Does the member think it is correct?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, no, it is not correct. In the government operations committee, we asked repeatedly whether the member for Edmonton Centre and GHI are still able to bid on government business.

GC Strategies, embroiled in the ArriveCAN scandal, has been banned from bidding on government business. The Liberals for some reason refuse to ban the member for Edmonton Centre's company from bidding on lucrative government contracts.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I do not get many opportunities to rise in the House these days, but this will be the last time. Although I am officially leaving the party in January, not today, this is a deeply emotional moment for me as I rise to deliver my last speech in the House.

I remember my maiden speech. It was on October 13, 2004. I was seated at the back, over there. I was up against the curtains. I was a bit thinner, my hair was a bit darker and I was very nervous. That was a little over 20 years ago. That maiden speech was the start of a great adventure, but at the same time, it was the end of the long journey that led to me becoming an MP.

I want to let you in on a secret, Mr. Speaker, but it has to stay between us. I have politics in my blood. It is in my DNA. I must say that my father is partly to blame for that. I have talked about it in the House before. In Argentina, my father ran for governor in our province. He opposed the military-controlled government. He was also a lawyer for political prisoners, who, most of the time, were simply student leaders or mothers of missing children who were standing up to the government. He was poisoned and he was tortured on several occasions. One night, while the whole family was sleeping, two bombs went off in our home. We were all injured, my parents, my sisters and me. We survived, but we all knew that it was just a matter of time before we were killed, so we left Argentina. By some miracle, we managed to escape.

We arrived in Quebec, in Canada. No one in the family spoke a word of English or French. We lost everything when we fled Argentina. We had nothing when we arrived here. We left with just a few suitcases for two parents and three children. In the beginning, my parents cleaned houses, mostly in Outremont. I went with them to help. We were regulars at the food bank and the Salvation Army. I remember wandering the aisles picking things out and buying them with very little money.

Through hard work and perseverance, my parents became professors. They both went back to school. My father got a PhD. They became professors at the Université de Sherbrooke and stayed there for over 20 years. I cannot tell you enough what great role models

they were for me. We know that things are not easy, but they are always possible in our society, when a person puts their heart into something, works hard and makes an effort. They deserve credit for that, but it is also thanks to the helping hand offered by Quebeckers, who gave us a warm welcome, that we were able to heal our wounds and get back on our feet.

I remember a conversation I had with my father right after we got here. He had survived torture and bombing. He had lost friends. He looked at me and said, “son, Canada is a welcoming country, a land of opportunity, and you can do anything you want here, but do not go into politics”. That time, I did not listen to him. However, on another occasion, he said, “human beings do not have a perfect set of tools to change the world and improve society, but the best tool they have right now is politics”. That time, I did listen to him.

I first became involved in politics as a student leader in high school and then in college and university. My commitment really deepened when I started campaigning with the young Liberals in the Quebec Liberal Party. It was a fascinating time. Several of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and from all over—I am thinking of one of my Conservative colleagues—were there. That was shortly after the Meech Lake accord failed. In my opinion, it was a huge mistake to reject that agreement. It was the early nineties, and we had the Allaire report, the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, the Charlottetown accord referendum and the 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty. I was a spokesperson for both referendums. The younger set were not very supportive of the Quebec sovereignty referendum. I remember, because I gave speeches in Saint-Hyacinthe, Chicoutimi, Sherbrooke, Saint-Jérôme, pretty much everywhere. It was a very lively and exciting time, and I will never forget it.

● (1620)

Over time, I continued to be active in politics, at both the provincial and federal levels. I had been on the scene for a long time when I stood for election in Honoré-Mercier in 2004. I thought I had it made. I thought I knew what politics was and believed I had been doing it for a long time. However, when I saw my face plastered on a pole for the first time, I froze and realized it was true. I know everyone here felt that way. I know I did. People feel it the first time they see their face on a poster, because it changes absolutely everything. That is when I realized that even though I had been politically active, I still had a lot to learn. I certainly can say I have learned a lot.

I want to thank the man who gave me that first chance, Paul Martin. I want to thank him for trusting me and believing in me. Without Mr. Martin, I would never have been here.

One thing I am most proud of is the passage of my private member's bill, Bill C-288, almost 20 years ago. The law required the government of the day, the Harper government, to report on its efforts to reach the Kyoto targets.

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

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Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Green Party of Canada.

For me, it was a tangible opportunity to create a better future for my daughter and for the generations to come. The government of the day did everything in its power to defeat my bill. Thanks to our work with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, however, we managed to do the almost impossible: We got a bill passed. This is proof that not only can we change things politically, but that everyone wins when we work together, because that is possible to do.

In politics, we often get the opportunity to work with exceptional people. There are some worthy men and women on both sides of the House. I have developed a deep respect for and genuine friendships with some of them. I am thinking in particular of the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who is a true gentleman. I am thinking of my friend from La Prairie, who is also the Bloc Québécois House leader, not to mention my friend, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, the NDP House leader. I would like to remind him that it was thanks to his party, thanks to the orange wave, that I lost my job and wound up on vacation in 2011. I thank him very much for the time to rest. I say that in all sincerity, because I learned more from that defeat than I ever did from my six electoral wins.

There are so many lessons to learn from losing an election. I was pigheaded. I lost on May 2, so on May 3, I hit the reset button. On May 3, I started over, because I wanted to reflect on the reasons for our defeat. I wanted to rebuild the party. I wanted to reconnect with the people of Honoré-Mercier, who had said “thanks but no thanks” this time and taken a pass on me.

Around that time, I became friends with a passionate young politician with great hair, who went on to become the leader of the party. I want to thank the Prime Minister for his trust, his advice, and above all, his friendship. Together, we won. We won the party's leadership race, and we won three elections, meaning three consecutive victories in Quebec in 2015, 2019 and 2021. That is not too shabby. The Speaker was part of that too. Together, we have made progress for Quebec and Canada. I want to say to the Prime Minister that it was an honour to serve alongside him. I thank my friend.

I would like to take a moment to thank the people who choose public service but work behind the scenes. The first such person is Geneviève Boisvert, the manager of my constituency office. Now she is mad at me because she hates being thanked publicly, but I have to do that because she has a special place in my career, and I owe her so much.

To everyone who has ever worked with me, whether in the riding, in the whip's office or the House leader's office, whether at Canadian Heritage, Transport or the lieutenant's office, I just want to say thank you very much, from the bottom of my heart, truly and sincerely.

• (1625)

[*English*]

Their advice made my job as an MP and a minister much easier. Their friendship has made it much more enjoyable and quite often really, really fun, I have to admit. I love those guys and I thank them so much.

To the public servants, the House of Commons staff from the kitchen to the pages, I thank them for choosing to serve our most prestigious democratic institution.

[*Translation*]

Then there are those who mean everything to us. No words can express how much I owe to Roxane and Béatrice. Words are not enough. Roxane and Béatrice know how much I love them and how grateful I am for their support, advice and encouragement. None of this would have been possible without them. Today, I want everyone to know what amazing women they are. I admire them so much. I love them.

In all the years I have been here, I have always fought for Quebec. Every time I studied a file or had to make a decision, I asked myself whether it was good for Quebec. I truly believe that defending and promoting Quebec's interests is an ongoing job. As the Quebec lieutenant, I was able to speak for the regions and state their challenges and priorities. I worked with the caucus chair on issues such as building the new Champlain Bridge, including Davie in the shipbuilding strategy and deploying high-speed Internet throughout the province.

I had opportunities to participate in negotiations with the Government of Quebec on issues like health, housing, and child care spaces, which really improved people's living conditions. Both as the Quebec lieutenant and as minister of Canadian heritage, I fiercely defended the French language and Quebec culture by standing up to the web giants, because protecting and promoting our culture also means ensuring the vitality of our identity as a nation.

I also made it my duty to stand up for the local press and a strong, autonomous and independent free press, which is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. I led these fights alongside the member for Drummond and the NDP House leader. I thank them both from the bottom of my heart.

Like my father before me, I sincerely believe that we can tackle every issue and challenge that people face. For that to happen, however, people have to be able to trust their leaders and institutions. That kind of trust must be earned. We all have to earn it collectively.

As my colleagues may know, on September 19, I crossed the Alexandra Bridge to launch my bid for the leadership for the Liberal Party of Quebec. That is where it all started for me, back when I was young and thought I knew everything. That is where I will continue to fight for Quebec. Over the past few years, I have spent a lot of time talking to people from all over the place. They have made it clear that, despite the current government's fine promises, nothing is better now than it was before. In fact, it is quite the contrary.

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I think that, as Quebeckers, we deserve better than a government whose go-to solution is the politics of division. That is why I decided to join this race, together with my family, and it was with my family by my side that I crossed the bridge. In crossing the bridge, I am leaving behind my friends and colleagues in caucus and in cabinet. I am leaving behind my pals from Quebec, including the Speaker. These are people I really adore. In crossing the bridge, I am leaving this seat that I longed for and dreamed about so much, that I worked so hard to win and that has made me so proud.

In crossing the bridge, I am leaving behind a big part of my career and my life. I would say that I did my best. It was far from perfect, but I gave it my all. I did it with conviction. I did it with pride, to the best of my ability, with a deep love for the House, for democracy, for Quebec and for Canada.

My first remarks in the House were addressed to my constituents in Honoré-Mercier, and so my final remarks will be, as well.

Without my constituents, without their friendship, their generosity and their trust, none of this would have been possible. The last 20 years have been an honour for me. It has been an honour to serve them. It has been the honour of my life, and I can never thank them enough.

[Member spoke in Spanish]

• (1630)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I love decorum. Do not take this personally, but I am going to turn my back to you so I can speak directly to the member for Honoré-Mercier.

We met for the first time on August 5, 2015. It was through the media, because we had 10 debates during the 2015 election campaign on a program called *24/60*. I was always pitted against the member for Honoré-Mercier, so we spent our first 10 meetings constantly bickering. Although he says he is not looking for a fight, he was looking for one in those days. I proudly defended the Conservative government's record, while he did his best for the Liberal Party. We also know how that turned out.

I want to commend my friend, the member for Honoré-Mercier. His personal story is very inspiring for everyone. He told it earlier. He is the son of immigrants who were forced out of their country because of armed violence. When he arrived here in Quebec, in Canada, he did not know who Guy Lafleur or Beau Dommage were and he only spoke Spanish. Within a few years, he could speak three languages, he could break down every one of Guy Lafleur's plays, and he knew all the words to every Beau Dommage song. I hope I am not giving away a secret, but he told me that his happiest moments in politics were when he was the heritage minister. He is a musician at heart, an artist, and he has a passion for life. I know that he is going to apply the same qualities and ambitions in another territory. No one is perfect.

His political career was a little different. He chose to get into politics. He made a choice. He said earlier that losing might have been the best thing that ever happened to him in politics. He won six times and lost once. I won six times and have not lost yet. I am not saying I would like to lose, far from it, but apparently it is a great learning experience. He lost the Honoré-Mercier riding once,

so that proves that no one's seat here is guaranteed. Anyone can be hit by a wave out of nowhere that carries us all to a new place. It can happen to anyone. It happened to the member for Honoré-Mercier.

Faced with an ordeal, we have two options. We can crumble, lie low and whine, or we can stand up, tackle the situation head-on and come out victorious. That is what he did. Oddly enough, he was not appointed to cabinet right away. I must admit that I was quite surprised, and I was not the only one. I remember very clearly that Jean Lapierre said, with deep affection for the member for Honoré-Mercier, that he might not have been appointed minister, but he still did a good job.

He served as minister of Canadian heritage and then as minister of transport. He was also the leader of the government in the House of Commons. This made him my counterpart, since I had the honour of serving as House leader of the official opposition under Erin O'Toole, and I can vouch for one thing: He was not looking for a fight. We talked often. We talked a lot, in fact. We were able to have discussions. Sure, in politics, it might look like we argue all day. That happens sometimes, or often. We always think we are right and the others are wrong. The truth is that we need dialogue and interesting conversations.

However, I must say one thing. He has been pretty sneaky lately. Over the past year, he has often risen in the House to talk about what is happening in Quebec, but he never let on to me what was going on with him. I thought that was a bit secretive of him. We will see what Quebeckers decide to do in this situation. If things work out, I would be very honoured to welcome him to the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent, which is not so far from the National Assembly. I know my way around that place, so if he wants some advice, I would be happy to talk to him about it.

In closing, the member for Honoré-Mercier and I do have some things in common. We are both sons of immigrants. Some might say that our hair looks the same, but I do not have a beard like him. We also both have children. We both have the privilege of being fathers. Our children, his daughter and my daughter, have the same name. I want to say hello to Béatrice. I also send my regards to the entire family sitting in the gallery. My daughter's name is Béatrice, in case that was not clear. My regards to them and to everyone who is here for him today. What a beautiful sign of the friendship and affection they feel for him as their father, husband or colleague.

• (1635)

There is one thing that truly unites the member for Honoré-Mercier and me, and that is our passion for Canada.

I wish my old friend every success for the future.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Honoré-Mercier said that he learned a lot from his defeat. Unfortunately, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent has never lost, so we do not know what his limitations are. I have lost three times, however, so I am a very learned person.

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It is an honour for me to rise to bid farewell to our colleague from Honoré-Mercier. For a long time, he was part of the Liberal government that keeps interfering in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. We, in the Bloc Québécois, have often said that if anyone wants to look after Quebec's affairs, then they should just go to Quebec, so I thank the member for Honoré-Mercier for listening to the Bloc Québécois. Some say that the Bloc Québécois is not good for anything, but now members can see that we have our uses.

The member for Honoré-Mercier is the Mini-Wheat of the House of Commons. As members know, Mini-Wheats have one side that is frosted and one side that is healthy. The member has a rabble-rouser side and a wise side. Since I was the House leader of the Bloc Québécois when he was the government House leader, I got to know his wise side and, unfortunately, I got to know his rabble-rouser side too, as one can imagine. Let us just say that he liked to fan the flames and put on a show in the House. Honestly, we liked that. Even if the member for Honoré-Mercier did tend to do that, he does not have any enemies that I know of. Everyone thinks he is funny and kind, and we do too.

I want to say that I did not rise to speak because I like to pick fights. He often referred to Bloc Québécois members as grumpy smurfs because we are blue at heart, but that is not why I rose to speak.

I know I am not allowed to say his name in the House, but the member has a strategy I call the “Pablo technique”. He is cunning. During question period, I often have a block of two questions, and he knows that we have blocks of two or three. During his first answer, he goes easy on us because he knows there will be another question. In response to our last question, he then goes on a rant. That is when he makes us pay. He knows we cannot respond, even if what he is saying makes no sense. That is the “Pablo technique”. I do not know if anyone in the Liberal Party has caught on, but if the Conservatives end up on the other side at some point, I imagine the technique will have its fans, that is for sure. That is his fiery side.

He also has a wise side, which I know and appreciate. He is an upstanding man, like the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. They are cut from the same cloth. They are men of their word, great men. When it was time to put partisanship aside, the member for Honoré-Mercier would raise his hand. It was time to discuss and make progress on the issues.

I was the Bloc Québécois House leader, and I still am. My colleague was the government's political lieutenant in Quebec at the time. I do not know if he remembers this. One of the first times we met, I introduced myself and told him that I was his natural ally. I told him that I was the Bloc Québécois House leader and that my one and only goal was to protect the interests of Quebec. It was simple. His job, as I understood it, was also to stand up for Quebec's interests, since he was the government's political lieutenant in Quebec. I have to say that any time he, my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent and I discussed things and worked together, Quebec came out ahead. Many Quebecers do not realize how many problems we solved together.

Things were intense during the COVID-19 crisis. I cannot even count the number of times a day we talked. I was talking to the

member more than I was talking to my own wife. We were always on the phone and it was not always easy. I remember that the member for Honoré-Mercier told me that we were building a plane in mid-air. I thought it was pretty straightforward, but I suppose that was not always the case. Obviously, we had work to do. We had to roll up our sleeves, and that is what we did.

I always enjoyed working with my colleague. I have a great deal of respect for him. Unfortunately, sometimes, we talk about the member for Honoré-Mercier to people who do not come to Parliament Hill or who do not know him and they only see his rabble-rouser side. They find it to be a bit too much or something. They say that he is a piece of work, but I tell them that he is actually a great guy. I will never forget the work that we did together. Obviously, he loves Quebec in his own way, and I love Quebec in a different way. We need to respect the fact that we have differing opinions. We were supposed to go get a beer. He told me that at one point. Of course, he will get a Canadian and I will get a Blue, but we can still go get a beer and drink to our friendship. I hope that one day, we will do that.

• (1640)

I have learned a lot from my fellow House leaders. When I got here, I was appointed House leader of the Bloc Québécois, but I had no experience as an MP, so I was a little stressed out. I watched my colleague from Honoré-Mercier and later my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, and I learned a lot from them. I did not say it to my colleague from Honoré-Mercier because I do not want his head to get too big. At some point, he may start thinking too highly of himself.

Obviously, it is hard for me to wish him a bright future, and understandably so. I hope the video clip of what I am saying today will not be used in Liberal ads during the 2027 election, because that would not go over well at all. I just wanted to spread it on a little thick and I am letting myself do that because he is leaving, and the least we can do is say something nice. Personally, I have known three great Argentinians: Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi and Pablo Rodriguez.

I want my parting words to him to be, “Until our next squabble, my friend”.

• (1645)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not pleased to make this speech today. When it comes down to it, after the member for Honoré-Mercier takes his leave, the House will be diminished in a way. We will certainly miss him, because he established a truly respectful way to deal with everyone.

[*English*]

After a political career that has lasted for a number of decades, the member is leaving the House without a single enemy. This is a remarkable achievement. He has treated every member in the House with respect. We are all fans of his to varying degrees because we understand that, fundamentally, he has respect for Parliament and for each and every one of us.

He also has fans right across the country, including a constituent of mine, who insists to this day that the member for Honoré-Mercier and the most interesting man in the world in the Dos Equis commercials are the same person. My constituent continues to insist on that.

[*Translation*]

He made remarkable changes. For my part, when I think of the member for Honoré-Mercier, I think of March 13, 2020. At that time, he showed his leadership and his respect for the institution, but also his respect for all Canadians. That is the day we closed Parliament during the pandemic. We made the decision together. We all left the House of Commons together. The House leader of the Bloc Québécois was there, as was I and the member for Honoré-Mercier, who was the government House leader at the time. We spoke to the media.

Let us recall the context. Parliament was not sitting and everything we did had to be done by unanimous consent. This was an emergency, and things had to be done for people across the country. To me, that was when the member for Honoré-Mercier, as the government House leader, truly changed things, because we had to work together. Bills had to be passed unanimously. At times we had to work until midnight, and each time, his leadership and his respect ensured that we could make all these important decisions to make it possible for people to have something to eat, for businesses to stay open, for people to keep their homes. All these things were, in large part, tied to our colleague's leadership, because he respected the institution and everyone who was involved. He truly knows how to bring people together. He knows how to listen to people and find a way to see things through. He demonstrated that many times both during and after the pandemic.

My colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent talked about the member for Honoré-Mercier's greatest work as minister of Canadian heritage. That is another example of him showing a great deal of respect for those who criticized him, including myself. I do, however, disagree with my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent. For me, his most striking work was what he did as government House leader. He also then showed the same ability to bring people together in the other departments he oversaw. He loves his riding, there is no doubt about that. He loves Quebec, which he has demonstrated throughout his career. He loves Canadians, which he has shown time and again in all the work he has undertaken.

We wish our friend nothing but the best. I wish him the best of luck in his next adventure. He will be sorely missed.

● (1650)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have gathered together today to pay tribute to a man whose commitment, wisdom and determination have marked not only this institution, but also Quebec and our entire country.

I thank my friend, my colleague, the member for Honoré-Mercier. He has dedicated many years of his life to serving our fellow Canadians. His career is a shining example of what the word “devotion” truly means. He has risen to complex challenges with admirable tenacity, and his actions have left an indelible mark on our shared history. His vision has led to remarkable progress in a variety of areas. Thanks to his leadership, we have been able to over-

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come obstacles and build bridges where once there seemed to be nothing but barriers and walls.

Apart from his political achievements, we will never forget his integrity, compassion and willingness to listen. He has stayed true to his values. Today, I salute not just a colleague, but a friend who is a brother, a mentor and an inspiration.

I know my friend, my colleague, the member for Honoré-Mercier. He has a will of iron, strong, ambitious, and robust, especially when it comes to protecting the interests of Canadians. His legacy will continue to guide us. He is a role model to us all.

I can finally thank him from the bottom of my heart for standing up for Quebec and Canada. Many, many, thanks for defending the French language in Canada.

I thank my colleague.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with my friend, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, that this is not a happy speech. It is a rather sad one.

I worked with our colleague from Honoré-Mercier when prime minister Stephen Harper was leading a minority government and it was possible to get things done. That was when the member for Honoré-Mercier and I became colleagues and friends.

This is a sad moment, but it is good that we are still MPs together, because someone among us has everyone's respect.

I thank my colleague, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. I could not agree with him more. However, to my colleague from La Prairie, I think it might not be the Bloc Québécois for our friend. Maybe it is the Green Party now, because the way forward will be green, I hope.

To my dear Liberal colleague, there is not much more I can say.

Our colleague has clearly had a tough life.

● (1655)

[*English*]

I think of his childhood in Argentina in a time of conflict.

[*Translation*]

His father was tortured.

[*English*]

I cannot imagine how hard it was in a time like that, with the junta killing people. It was a hard childhood to have. As my colleagues have said, he came here without a word of English or French, as a little guy speaking only Spanish. Now here we are.

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Everyone here in the House of Commons is paying tribute to our colleague and friend. As the member for New Westminster—Burnaby said, everyone here likes him. That is extraordinary. What a track record for an MP, a politician in our country. The only thing I can say is that I will miss him.

I hope that we will work together in the future, perhaps when I am prime minister. I always dream big.

[English]

I want to say thanks to our friend Pablo. It was no small thing to get a private member's bill through that protected Kyoto, for as long as that bill lasted. I am really grateful to my colleague and friend, and I think we are all going to miss him.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Colleagues, there is a saying in politics that we are never so happy to see someone as we are on the day that they arrive and on the day that they leave.

I can say that that is not the case for the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier, who has shown that the House of Commons is a special place, where we can see the unanimity and collegiality that exists among us and the friendship that we have with one of our peers.

I commend the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier. He is a long-time friend. We have known each other for nearly 31 years. I have to say that he is right. He did have darker hair, but he still had a beard even then. He was a bit thinner, but just as handsome and elegant.

He loves his nation and his country to his core. I learned a lot from him. Everyone has said it: We will miss him. We will really miss my dear friend.

I want to thank him for everything that he taught me and for all the work that he has done here in Ottawa.

I wish him nothing but the best.

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 Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Ethics; the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Housing; the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, Health.

• (1700)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to spend much time with the member for Honoré-Mercier, but I wish him the best of luck in Quebec City. We are both of Latin American origin, so we share a certain heritage and pride in Latin America, which is often evident in Quebec society. Again, I wish him the best of luck.

Today, we are talking about a report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, on which I have the honour of serving as vice-chair. The purpose of the report was to look a little deeper into ArriveCAN, but more specifically to address an issue raised during the ArriveCAN study.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I cannot hear myself speak.

The Deputy Speaker: The individuals in question can see me now.

[English]

They are taking up much of the time and the sound in the chamber.

The hon. member for Terrebonne.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The curtains are not soundproof. People should know that.

The committee unanimously adopted a report about a particularly troubling issue. This is the report: “That the committee report to the House that it calls on the government to prohibit any government employee from simultaneously working as an external contractor”.

It is like asking a young student to do their homework. It is as simple and basic as that. For years, a public servant employed by what is supposed to be one of the most secure departments, the Department of National Defence, was also working as a subcontractor for that department and for other departments as well. How could the government let that happen? It is not very encouraging that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts had to make this kind of request.

Let us talk about this. I will go over the context surrounding ArriveCAN. I do not think we have talked enough about it yet, because there is still no accountability when it comes to what happened with ArriveCAN. No ministers or agency heads have taken responsibility. No one has taken responsibility for the ArriveCAN fiasco.

I will remind members of what happened. In early 2024, the Office of the Auditor General published a report on the management of the ArriveCAN application. The Auditor General described it as the worst bookkeeping she had seen in her career. The ArriveCAN app was supposed to cost \$80,000, but ended up costing \$60 million.

The Auditor General's report took a fairly extensive look at the role of GC Strategies in this whole business. It also discussed Dalian, the second company that received the largest share of funding in this affair. The Auditor General reported that Dalian had pocketed \$7.9 million, which Dalian's owner refuted, claiming that the Auditor General did not know how to count. That is a new one. He said that his company received only \$4.9 million. However, for a one-person company, that still seems like a lot to pay for an app initially expected to cost only \$80,000.

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What we are discovering with the ArriveCAN file is that this saga is just the tip of the iceberg and there are various issues at stake, including the one we are talking about today in this committee report, namely, double-dipping. It really just means that two things are done simultaneously. Here, it means being paid by taxpayers twice for the same hours of work. I do not believe that anyone can work effectively 24 hours a day, even if they say they are working multiple jobs. It is just not possible.

It is only natural, then, in a self-respecting, healthy democracy for parliamentarians to be responsible for ensuring that the government functions properly. It is only natural for us to take a closer look at what may have happened and, above all, to ensure that it does not happen again. Clearly, if it has come to this, that means there are huge procurement problems within the federal government.

That is how the government has been operating for at least 15 years now. It is so difficult to get onto the pre-selected list of companies that the government deals with a lot of small companies that do not actually provide any services at all, but merely act as intermediaries to find subcontractors that will ultimately provide services to the government. The government started investing huge sums. It tripled or even quintupled the number of contracts being offered to consultants. Often, it was done through these agencies, which ultimately just inflate the price of the service that taxpayers receive.

The government has to pay these agencies a commission. The Dalian CEO we are talking about today, Mr. Yeo, claims to have pocketed a commission of 12% to 20% for providing no service other than finding subcontractors. Often, these subcontractors had already been found by government officials. In the end, taxpayers pay far more than they should with a dysfunctional federal apparatus.

Moreover, the federal government has hired a lot more civil servants. Often, the civil servants and the subcontractors were the same people. It is still happening today. In the end, we pay more than twice. We pay for the subcontractors, we pay for the employees, who bill us for practically the same hours, and, on top of that, we hire more civil servants to manage the subcontractors we already pay as employees. Do people realize how absurd this is?

● (1705)

We are talking about a company that took advantage of a broken system and pushed that advantage to the extreme.

Let us briefly look at who David Yeo is. He has owned Dalian since 2001 and, according to his own LinkedIn page, he has been a subcontractor for the Department of National Defence since 1987. Dalian has received \$200 million from the federal government since 2015. Another company, Coradix, bought a 49% stake in Dalian. The two companies shared the same offices. The owners of Coradix were actually also the directors of Dalian. I will come back to Coradix a little later, but there was also a connection with Coradix.

More specifically, in the ArriveCAN affair, on September 19, 2023, David Yeo was hired by the Department of National Defence. He signed a contract with the Department of National Defence. He

had to fill out a conflict of interest declaration form. On September 28, nine days later, a contract was signed between that same department, the Department of National Defence, and Dalian. Who signed that contract? It was signed by David Yeo, the same David Yeo who had started working at the Department of National Defence nine days earlier.

On October 31, last fall, while working as a full-time employee at the Department of National Defence, Mr. Yeo appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates as the owner of Dalian. When I asked the Department of National Defence representatives how one of their employees could appear before the committee without anyone noticing, they just laughed and said they did not really watch parliamentary committees. Public servants had the nerve to say this to members of a parliamentary committee who were asking them why the same person was being paid twice for working the same hours. They do not watch parliamentary committees. It is shameful.

On February 28, the department learned about the relationship between its new employee, Mr. Yeo, and Dalian, one of its frequent subcontractors. It was not until March 5 that David Yeo resigned from the Department of National Defence.

We also learned from media reports, which we corroborated using various sources, that Mr. Yeo has accounts in tax havens. Obviously, when we received Mr. Yeo in committee, we asked him about that. Mr. Yeo's answer was staggering. I asked him about his tax haven accounts and he said that he was interested in international business and how business is done in other countries, like Bermuda or whatever other Caribbean island interested him. He was interested in learning how business is conducted over there. He would go around opening accounts just for the fun of it. I am not even joking. That is exactly what he told me. He likes doing business in tax havens. There we have it, a tiny glimpse into the character of the person we are discussing today.

Here is another example involving a company. I mentioned the commissions that some companies were paying even though they did not deliver any services at all. There was the case of one well-known company, one of the "Big Four", KPMG, which received an \$80,000 commission for GC Strategies. Again, this was in the ArriveCAN case. Civil servants had settled on KPMG as the company capable of delivering the services. However, an official said that the government did not want to sign a contract directly with KPMG, even though KPMG had already been pre-selected. The government preferred to go through GC Strategies. In the end, taxpayers paid even though the company that was to provide the services had already been found. Taxpayers still paid an \$84,000 commission to GC Strategies, even without GC Strategies providing the service it had offered, which was to find the subcontractor. The subcontractor had already been found. That \$84,000 commission was pure theft.

I think the most important point of the report we are debating today is that it was adopted unanimously in the House. That is because it is so self-evident. It reflects a feeling that Quebeckers, and Canadians for that matter, experience quite often these days on a regular basis: the feeling of being cheated.

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● (1710)

Yes, there was the ArriveCAN affair. I would also very much like to talk about the saga of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, but I think that even my own colleagues are a bit fed up with hearing about it. I am going to do it anyway, though, because I believe it is a very important issue.

My colleague from Beauport—Limoilou's questions beautifully sum up what I have been trying to explain to the House for months. We are paying double for everything. The federal government is interfering in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction while mismanaging its own areas. Just look at the passport saga or the Canada Revenue Agency. It is all so poorly managed, yet it is a federal responsibility. The government is hiring consultants to help it operate more efficiently, while also expanding the public service. Under the nose of government officials, some people have decided to double-dip, probably thinking that there will be no consequences. This is a huge problem. The public service seems corrupt, and that is a big problem. Ultimately, some people are double-dipping.

As I said earlier, average citizens feel they are being cheated. I mentioned two scandals, but there are so many other examples. I am not even going to touch on Conservative scandals, but I could. I have a little list here.

We could talk about the sponsorship scandal of 2002. We could talk about Chinese billionaires donating to the Liberal Party of Canada in order to have a chat with the Prime Minister. We could talk about the Prime Minister's fashion faux pas in various countries where, actually, those clothes cost quite a bit of money. We could talk about the SNC-Lavalin scandal and WE Charity. We could talk about ArriveCAN. We could talk about the travel expenses scandal, about the \$190,000 spent on food and airfare for a single trip, the \$160,000 spent on a Christmas holiday vacation in Jamaica and the \$1,660,000 spent on a trip to India. We could talk about the scandal involving the member for Edmonton Centre, the former employment and official languages minister, who just resigned. We could talk about the SDTC scandal. Once again, we are talking tens of millions of dollars.

What I found out about SDTC and what was revealed last week in committee is quite serious. The former chair of the SDTC board was investing in what is known as a venture capital fund. She was investing in a venture capital fund that was investing in companies that were receiving money from the government. She was getting richer as a result, and she got richer still from the money she obtained from the government. I do not know what people want to call it, but if that is not a scandal, then I do not know what is. However, maybe people are used to scandals by now.

Let us also talk about Coradix, the firm that partnered with Dalian and whose owners have a 49% stake in Dalian. Do members know that Coradix is now suing the government? It takes a lot of nerve to sue the government for the contracts that have been suspended. It was Coradix's ties to David Yeo, the founding president of the consulting firm, that cost the company its bread and butter. The contracts were suspended. The two companies had formed a joint venture to get contracts that were being awarded to indigenous entrepreneurs because David Yeo belongs to one such community. They shared offices in downtown Ottawa, had the same chair for

their respective boards of directors and managed a total of 475 IT consultants for the federal government in return for the lucrative commissions that I mentioned earlier. Coradix was well aware of Mr. Yeo's activities, but it did not say anything and continued to bid on tenders. There were tons of people who knew what was going on and simply said nothing.

Now this company has had the nerve to come and ask the government for financial compensation for the suspended contracts, even though they knew that the company's owner, who owns 49% of the shares, was double-dipping. They came and asked for compensation for that, compensation for turning a blind eye, essentially. It was not about getting reimbursed for previous contracts. It was about future contracts being suspended. Obviously, there will be no future contracts. They thought that was too harsh a punishment for turning a blind eye to the highly reprehensible act of stealing from taxpayers.

● (1715)

In that regard, I really hope the government takes a hard line on this. It is doing things that make it look a bit ridiculous. Let us hope that it does not get any more ridiculous, that it does not go so far as to pay this company again for turning a blind eye to this reprehensible misuse of taxpayer money. I really hope the government takes a hard line. I do not want the tax dollars of my constituents, Quebecers and Canadians to be used to reimburse such a company.

In closing, respect for institutions is very important in a healthy democracy. I repeat that often in the House because it seems to be forgotten. It is one scandal after another right now, and the public is feeling cheated. The media is not even reporting on the SDTC scandal anymore, except for the fact that it is obstructing the work of the House. This is a major scandal, though. Maybe ordinary people feel like it is just another scandal.

What is going to happen next week when the Auditor General releases her new reports? Will the public and the media feel jaded and say that it is just another Liberal scandal?

I hope not. It really is important for people to stay informed and take an interest in what is going on at the federal level, in how their money is being managed. In a healthy democracy, it is fundamental for people to have confidence in their institutions.

What I really want today is to remind the government that such a self-evident report must be respected. It was important to move concurrence in this report in the House, however. It is a matter of maintaining confidence in our institutions. That is the foundation of democracy.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate working with my colleague from the Bloc on the various issues of Liberal scandal.

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I want to ask the member specifically about the company owned by the member for Edmonton Centre, who is still a member of the Liberal caucus. This company continues to be eligible for bids on government contracts. It has committed indigenous identity fraud, falsely claiming to be indigenous-owned, and continues to be owned by a member of the government caucus. Our position in the Conservative Party is that this company should no longer be able to bid on government contracts. It does not make sense for a company that has committed indigenous identity fraud and is owned by a member of the government caucus to simultaneously be bidding on government contracts.

Would the member agree that Global Health Imports, owned by the member for Edmonton Centre, should be barred from bidding on government contracts?

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, let us just say that the response has to be carefully considered.

However, there is one key point. I think it is appalling that programs intended to support the development of indigenous and first nations entrepreneurs are being misused. These are programs designed to help first nations develop their economies and build their capacity and expertise so that they can become more and more self-sufficient. However, the funds are being misappropriated, as we saw in the case of the former minister of employment, workforce development and official languages. It is totally outrageous. As my leader said at a press conference, we are relieved that the minister resigned.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is now two months that Parliament has done nothing but debate the same thing over and over again. I feel like we are immature children in a sandbox as a tsunami is coming.

We are facing president-elect Trump. We have to deal, as a nation, with serious issues, from what he is going to do with Putin, to trade wars. If he moves forward with deporting 12 million people with bayonets and soldiers, it will have a massive impact on the border. There is also Robert Kennedy, a kook who believes there is no such thing as safe vaccines. I know many in the Conservative caucus probably agree with that, but this disinformation will have serious impacts on our nation and our ability to keep people safe.

Why are we sitting around going in circles with the lazy Liberals and toxic Conservatives when we need a plan in place to show that this democracy can work to address what is going to be coming after January 20?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question, and I must say that I agree with him 100%. There are a lot of very important files that we are unable to talk about in the House simply because the government refuses to send us the documents. As we now know, these are important documents. The further the Standing Committee on Public Accounts gets into its study on Sustainable Development Technology Canada, the clearer it becomes that certain documents were con-

cealed from the consulting firms. There are no HR complaint documents and no lists of past conflicts of interest. Those are all reports that were not sent to the consulting firms tasked with conducting the investigations.

We would very much like to get that information from the government. However, the government still refuses to send us the documents. This is paralyzing the House and I agree that that it is unfortunate. However, as my leader so aptly said, seeing the Liberals and Conservatives taking shots at each other and ultimately refusing to govern Canada only reminds us, the Bloc Québécois, that it is high time we got out of this country.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Terrebonne for her speech, but, at the same time, every time I hear this, I shudder. I am a bit shocked, actually.

A few months ago, I replaced my colleague from Beauport—Limouilou on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The meeting was on hiring external consultants. This was around the time when we were seeing news reports about the huge number of public servants who had been hired. I asked whether it was contradictory to hire more public servants and more external consultants at the same time. The answer I got was that it was because the public servants did not have enough expertise.

That suggests the government was hiring public servants without expertise, then paying for external consultants to provide the expertise that the newly hired public servants did not have. I am trying to understand that. I am not sure if my colleague can explain it to me.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question gives me an opportunity to provide a little background on what happened.

The Harper Conservative government made a lot of cuts to the public service, and some expertise was probably lost at that time. When the Liberals came to power, they started hiring en masse to recover that expertise, while relying on consultants to fill any gaps in the expertise.

That is how we ended up with one government that just wants to cut and another that just wants to hire and spend. Our money is quite simply being mismanaged.

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• (1725)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on comments the member made about indigenous identity fraud. We have been studying the Liberals' indigenous contracting scandal and how non-indigenous elite insiders, such as the member for Edmonton Centre, have had companies try to gain access to government contracts that are supposed to benefit indigenous entrepreneurs. One of the concerns I have been hearing from indigenous leaders is that indigenous identity fraud is a growing problem that is not taken seriously. The penalties that would normally be associated with fraud do not seem to be applied in the case of indigenous identity fraud.

We have people in various places, including when they seek government contracts, pretending to be indigenous and not facing any consequences. Even if they are found out and are not able to access whatever the opportunities are, there are still no penalties. We see this happening with the former minister from Edmonton Centre, in particular with his company. The company he owns is still eligible for government contracts. In other instances of fraud, this would automatically be taken more seriously, yet Liberals are turning a blind eye. They are not taking it seriously. They are not applying penalties when a company or an individual misrepresents themselves for commercial advantage by pretending to be indigenous.

Why does the member think the Liberals have consistently failed to take the concerns of indigenous leaders seriously when it comes to the growing problem of indigenous identity fraud?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, in the history of the Americas, many wrongs have been done to first nations. That is why Quebec established a nation-to-nation approach with indigenous peoples, with first peoples, quite some time ago. I think it works much better to ensure that every nation feels respected.

In contrast, with the Indian Act, the federal government continues to treat some first nations like children who need help. Unfortunately, this is not the best way to right the wrongs of the past. When some people try to make a buck by taking advantage of the assistance that the federal government is trying to provide to first nations, it is even more outrageous. It essentially tells first nations that the wrongs of the past were not real wrongs and that the assistance they are supposed to get is ultimately going to the government's cronies. That is seriously problematic.

Quebec takes a different approach, with the hope that first nations will become our brothers and sisters in a future sovereign Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise this afternoon to speak to a report produced by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, of which I am a member. To be exact, this is a motion to concur in the 37th report of the committee, which dealt with the first 2024 report of the Auditor General of Canada, tabled last spring.

I will say off the top that I was not a member of this committee when the report was produced. The report consists of a single sen-

tence that reads, “That the committee report to the House that it calls on the government to prohibit any government employee from simultaneously working as an external contractor.”

The motion that was put forward to create this report was supported by all the opposition parties, but not supported by the Liberal members of the committee, and I must say that it seems like a completely logical report, if extraordinarily short, so I am not sure why the Liberals voted against it. Be that as it may, the ArriveCAN app has been studied by numerous committees of the House of Commons, and for good reason. This is one of the most egregious examples of fiscal scandal that we have encountered from the government, and there have been many. On top of the public accounts committee, it has been dealt with in detail by the government operations committee, the industry committee and the international trade committee. I am sorry if I left any out. It might have been brought before the ethics committee. It certainly has been a clear lapse of ethics in many ways.

While I am a newly minted member of the public accounts committee, I was a member of the international trade committee when we studied and reported on ArriveCAN, so today I would like to direct my comments on ArriveCAN to the economic impacts of the app, in particular in reference to that study, entitled “The ArriveCAN Digital Tool: Impacts on Certain Canadian Sectors”.

We debated the report on that study a year ago, so some of my comments today will be similar to those I gave last November. Just to remind people, in case they forgot about the pandemic, the COVID pandemic hit North America in March 2020, closing this place on March 13, and a week later, on March 20, the governments of Canada and the United States agreed to temporarily restrict all non-essential travel across the border.

The pandemic had huge effects on the Canadian economy, and many of those impacts arose from restrictions that were placed on crossing the Canada-U.S. border. The ArriveCAN app was launched in April 2020, so basically a month after the pandemic was recognized. It allowed travellers entering Canada to input their quarantine plans and later their vaccination information in digital format. Then on November 1, 2020, use of the ArriveCAN app became mandatory for travellers entering Canada. I have to point out here that it was not so much the use of ArriveCAN that affected travellers, but the fact that for almost two years, from November 2020 to September 2022, the app was mandatory. Everyone crossing the border into Canada was required to use it. They could not fill out their information on the paper forms that had been used initially in the pandemic.

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The international trade committee study I am discussing was concerned with the impact that the mandatory use of ArriveCAN had on certain sectors, in particular tourism. I think the most obvious impact was that when we create an application that can only be used on smart phones or tablets and then make it mandatory, it has an immediate impact on anyone who does not own a smart phone or a tablet, or even on those who find using smart phones a challenge. As such, I was a bit surprised that when the government was deciding to make this mandatory, no one asked the obvious question: What about people who do not have smart phones? Seniors are clearly a group that broadly fits that description.

This problem caused a lot of delays at border crossings, especially land border crossings. I heard a lot about that from my constituents, as there are six land border crossings in my riding, probably the most in the country for any riding. My constituents are used to travelling back and forth across the border for business, for shopping or for tourism, and many of them were affected by the mandatory requirement to use ArriveCAN. One of the additional problems in my riding is that several of these border crossings are found in areas without cell coverage, so people could not use the app at the border, or if there was cell coverage, it was from a U.S. cell tower so they had to pay extra roaming charges. All this resulted in extra work for travellers and border agents alike.

• (1730)

Mark Weber, the national president of the Customs and Immigration Union, said in testimony:

What I can tell you is that the numbers provided to you earlier by the CBSA, which said that 99% of air travellers and 94% of land travellers have the app completed, are absolutely false. Those numbers are the percentages completed after we helped them complete with the app. In the Eastern Townships branches, the numbers were closer to 60%, for example. Overall, we're looking at closer to 75% to 80% having it completed.

Essentially, our officers now largely work as IT consultants. You have land borders that have essentially become parking lots, with us helping people complete the app.

Mr. Weber's point was that it would have been quicker and more efficient for those who could not use the app to simply continue providing the paper form for giving information about quarantine plans and showing their proofs of vaccinations to CBSA officers, rather than having officers help them enter the information on phones they did not have or did not know how to use. Workers in duty-free stores had to help travellers with the app as well.

I want to remind people that it was not completely straightforward to use the app. Even with all this incredible amount of money spent, the app was filled with glitches. I consider myself pretty tech-savvy; I use two smart phones every day. However, it took me some work to save my vaccine certificates as images, find those files and upload them to the app.

There was an adverse impact on seniors, both Canadian seniors returning from the U.S. and American seniors trying to visit Canada. For one thing, the app asked for an address in Canada where the traveller would quarantine if needed. This requirement forced day trippers from the U.S. to lie because they had no real Canadian address to enter. We heard one story of a bus full of American seniors planning to spend the day on the more scenic

Canadian side of Niagara Falls; they turned around at the border because of the ArriveCAN requirements.

A friend of mine was caught in a catch-22 web when she only uploaded one of her vaccine proofs, even though she had been vaccinated twice. The app did not like that, and it triggered a series of collection agency-like calls at all hours, threatening her with massive fines and worse. When she complained to the CBSA, she was told to simply ignore the threats.

The mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app had an impact on travel across the border, especially in terms of tourism. There are data I could cite that clearly show the immense impact of the pandemic in general on tourism, but it is hard to parse the exact economic impact of the ArriveCAN app itself.

The international trade report had some important recommendations about the app, as well as how the government could respond to support the tourism industry, which is still recovering from COVID restrictions. I would just like to mention two of those recommendations here.

The first was this:

That the Government of Canada ensure the safety and security of Canadians by continuing with its ongoing efforts designed to modernize Canada's borders, including through the use of appropriate digital and non-digital tools, and through the provision of adequate human and other resources. These efforts should be informed by consultations with relevant stakeholders, during which particular attention should be paid to concerns about the potential for significant disruptions, confusion or delays at Canadian ports of entry. The focus should be airports and land crossings, including international bridges.

On this recommendation, I would just comment that we should encourage travellers to use digital tools when crossing the border by making these tools easy to use and ensuring that their use will make the travellers' entry into Canada easier, quicker and more efficient. That will result in more people using the tools. The lesson from ArriveCAN is that making digital tools mandatory will almost always result in unintended negative consequences.

The other recommendation I wanted to point out was this:

That the Government of Canada ensure that international bridge authorities and commissions, as well as duty-free stores in Canada, are eligible for federal financial support if the Government decides to close—for any length of time—the borders that Canada shares with the United States.

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• (1735)

On this recommendation, I would like to comment on the incredible impact the COVID pandemic had on one sector within the tourism sector, and that is land-based duty-free stores. They suffered the biggest impact of any sector in Canada. My constituent Cam Bissonnette has two duty-free stores; he found that his business was in an essentially impossible position when the borders were closed because of COVID. For months on end, his business suffered a decline of over 95% in revenue. He and others in his sector were stuck with perishable inventory that they could not legally sell to anyone. While things have improved slowly since the borders reopened, the devastating impact of those times when the borders were closed have made it almost impossible to survive. I will simply add that I think the duty-free sector is generally misunderstood by the federal government in several ways, and I would ask that the government listen to its concerns carefully.

The main scandal here is the wanton waste of public money on an app that should never have been made mandatory. We are hearing plenty about that waste today. The ArriveCAN scandal is a very serious issue. It deserves to be studied thoroughly here in the House of Commons. As I mentioned earlier, it has been and is being studied at a number of committees. I know that public accounts has yet to produce a final report on it.

I will finish by saying that many of these scandals were directly caused by the rampant contracting out of work that could and should have been done by the public service. I want to mention the example the member for Terrebonne mentioned in her speech about the ArriveCAN scandal, in which not only did someone gain a lot of money through the wanton, terrible use of contracting out, with overspending on a massive scale, but that person was also already a member of the public service. They were getting money from both ends at the same time.

The latest file the international trade committee was looking at is CARM, the CBSA assessment and revenue management system, which is being developed by Deloitte. Again, it was farmed out to Deloitte, which is being paid almost \$200 million to do that. It has been delayed again and again because, for various reasons, it was not working as planned. This is something that should have been developed in-house by the CBSA or by some part of the public service so that we would not have that incredible overspending. It suffices to say that the NDP is very much in favour of the House of Commons finally getting to the bottom of the ArriveCAN scandal. Today's debate will provide some opportunity to do that.

• (1740)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for me to answer three questions today.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 3057, 3058 and 3068.

[Text]

Question No. 3057—**Ms. Leah Gazan:**

With regard to the funding programs falling under Employment and Social Development Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, broken down by fiscal year from 2018 to the present: (a) which organizations received funding, broken down by (i) funding stream, (ii) province, (iii) federal riding; (b) how much funding did each organization in (a) receive, broken down by (i) funding stream, (ii) province, (iii) federal riding; (c) what evaluation criteria were used to determine which program applications were successful, broken down by funding stream; and (d) what evaluation criteria were used to determine whether or not a successful program applicant was provided renewed funding in subsequent years, broken down by funding stream?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Employment and Social Development Canada, ESDC, undertook an extensive search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of this question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response.

After a thorough analysis of the ESDC grants and contributions database, the department concluded that over 200,000 data entries would be required to ensure a comprehensive response to this enquiry. Producing and validating this volume of information is not possible within the allotted time, as this could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 3058—**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:**

With regard to the government's reaction to Euroclear's acknowledgment of the Canadian dollars it holds as a result of maturing Russian-owned securities: (a) what initiatives, if any, has the government taken to determine or exert Canada's jurisdiction over Russian state assets held in correspondent banks or invested in Canadian dollars by Euroclear directly held in Canada or those re-invested in Canadian currency, held in correspondent banks in Canada, or invested in Canadian dollars by Euroclear and other depositories and foreign partnerships; (b) what is the government's estimate of the value of the assets in (a) subject to Canadian jurisdiction (cash, securities, bonds, etc.), including those directly held in Canada and those invested in Canadian currency, broken down by the nature of the assets; and (c) what steps has the government taken since the announcement of the Canada-Ukraine Strategic Security Partnership on February 24, 2024, related to the seizure of Russian state assets held in correspondent banks in Canada and invested in Canadian dollars by Euroclear and other depositories and foreign partnerships, including the (i) date of the event associated with the seizure, (ii) collection information regarding total amounts seized or subject to Canada's authority to seize, (iii) nature of the assets that were seized or subject to the authority to seize?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the Department of Finance continues to engage closely with international partners to hold Russia to account for its illegal invasion of Ukraine, including through the Russian elites, proxies, and oligarchs task force, REPO, whose members include Australia, Canada, the European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. REPO members have collectively immobilized around \$280 billion U.S. in Russian sovereign assets.

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With regard to part (b), on the basis of these consultations, the Department of Finance understands that approximately 8% of the immobilized assets held by Euroclear are denominated in Canadian dollars. These assets are held in the form of cash or near cash, that is, highly liquid assets such as short-term treasury securities or certificates of deposit. The Department of Finance has sought details on the nature of these assets and their owner or owners. That information remains a commercial confidence of Euroclear.

With regard to part (c), Canada has led work in concert with the EU and other G7 countries on ways to use immobilized Russian sovereign assets to contribute to the reconstruction of Ukraine, the restoration of peace and security, and the compensation of victims of the conflict. In June 2024, G7 leaders confirmed their intention to provide financing that will be serviced and repaid by future flows of extraordinary revenues stemming from the immobilization of Russian sovereign assets held in the EU and other relevant jurisdictions. The Prime Minister announced in June 2024 that Canada is ready to contribute \$5 billion to G7 extraordinary revenue acceleration loans for Ukraine, which aim to bring forward future revenues from frozen Russian sovereign assets in order to provide Ukraine with approximately \$69 billion Canadian or \$50 billion U.S.

Question No. 3068—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to Health Canada's (HC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) decision to withdraw the market authorization of and to destroy the COVID-19 XBB.1.5 vaccines and future assessment of upcoming mRNA vaccines: (a) are there material differences between the XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccines and the new 2024-2025 formulation beyond the mRNA coding for a different spike protein strain; (b) if (a) is affirmative, what are the differences; (c) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, how will Canadians processing claims against the vaccine manufacturers be able to prove their allegations when physical evidence is required and has been destroyed; (d) what is the estimated number of COVID-19 vaccine vials that will be destroyed, broken down by manufacturer (Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, others); (e) what is the estimated dollar cost to Canadians to destroy these vaccine products, per vaccine and in total; (f) what is the regulatory process for COVID-19 vaccines which resulted in a "contractual obligation for Health Canada to withdraw all XBB products from the market until a lot could be released and distributed in Canada" (Global news); (g) what is the contractual obligation in (f) and with whom; (h) will provinces be able to order any interim supply of the COVID-19 XBB vaccines and, if not, why not; (i) with respect to the statement made by Pfizer/BioNTech on October 20, 2023, found on page 56 of Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) 2024-000097-2024-08-22, that Pfizer "would be open to discuss the outcome from the plasmid backbone modification evaluation with Health Canada", does HC expect the removal of the SV40 sequences from the updated Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines for 2024-25; (j) is HC considering the assessment of future mRNA-based vaccines to continue under the Centre for Vaccines, Clinical Trials and Biostatistics or to be transferred to another Centre or Department within Biologic and Radiopharmaceutical Drugs Directorate or elsewhere, and, if so, what would be the criteria or rationale?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to parts (a) to (j), as part of the standard regulatory process for drugs and vaccines, when a new drug or vaccine is authorized by Health Canada, a drug identification number, DIN, is issued. The product DIN is a unique number that identifies the following product characteristics: manufacturer, product name, active ingredients, strengths of active ingredients, pharmaceutical form, and route of administration. As the circulating strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus change, companies update their COVID-19 vaccines based on the latest evidence to ensure Canadians have access to vaccines that target the latest strains of the virus. The updates are filed to Health Canada for review and are considered as modifications to the existing drug rather than a new

drug. Therefore, a new DIN is not issued for the updated vaccines should they be authorized by Health Canada, but the previous vaccines should be quarantined or removed from sale to ensure that there is no overlap of two different vaccines with the same DIN. The DIN is an important element that is used to track vaccine safety, and it is important to have a discrete vaccine assigned to the DIN to ensure adverse events following vaccination are tagged to the correct product. This is the same approach that is taken for the annual influenza vaccines and is consistent with the approach of our international regulatory partners such as the European Medicines Agency and the Food and Drug Administration.

COVID-19 vaccine targeting the XBB 1.5 variant are no longer available on the Canadian market, as an updated formulation with increased effectiveness has now been approved. The Moderna Spikevax and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty KP.2 COVID-19 mRNA vaccines were authorized by Health Canada on September 17, 2024, and September 24, 2024, respectively and are available to provinces and territories to support 2024-25 immunization activities.

In September 2024, Health Canada authorized two updated mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines that more closely match circulating strains: Spikevax by Moderna for the KP.2 strain, and Comirnaty by Pfizer for the KP.2 strain. Beyond the mRNA coding for a different strain, the formulations of the updated vaccines remain unchanged. The Pfizer presentation has been expanded to include a single-dose syringe in addition to the multidose vial.

Health Canada cannot comment on the mRNA sequence of the Pfizer vaccine, as this is confidential business information. However, it is noted that the presence of the SV40 promoter enhancer sequence is not the same as the presence of the whole virus itself. The SV40 promoter enhancer sequence was found to be a residual DNA fragment in the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The fragment is inactive, has no functional role and was measured to be consistently below the limit required by Health Canada and other international regulators.

The biologic and radiopharmaceutical drugs directorate, BRDD, within the health products and food branch of Health Canada is responsible for the review of biologics, including mRNA-based vaccines. The products assigned to each review centre are determined by product indication, product technology, reviewer expertise and workload. Currently, mRNA vaccines are reviewed in the centre for vaccines, clinical trials and biostatistics of the BRDD.

The estimated number of COVID-19 vaccines in federal possession requiring destruction is approximately 670,000 doses of Pfizer. The estimated cost for the destruction of the 670,000 doses is approximately \$137,000.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]***QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 3059 to 3067 and 3069 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 3059—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to the Canadian Heraldic Authority's (CHA) issuance of coats of arms, emblems, and other insignia: (a) which departments, agencies, or government entities have commissioned something from the CHA since 2015; and (b) what are the details of each commission, including (i) the total cost, (ii) a breakdown of the spending (design, printing, calligraphy and any other relevant costs), (iii) the date of the commission, (iv) the purpose of the commission or event associated with the design, (v) the specific commission, court, organization, or subset within the department, agency or entity to which it was issued?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3060—Mr. Sameer Zuberi:

With regard to any federal government employees fired or terminated for cause since January 1, 2019, broken down by department or agency, and by year: (a) what was the total number of employees fired or terminated for cause; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by reason for termination?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3061—Mr. Sameer Zuberi:

With regard to expenditures on artwork by government departments and agencies since January 1, 2019, and broken down by year: (a) what was the total expenditure on artwork; (b) what was the total expenditure for the purchase of artwork; (c) what was the total expenditure for the rental of artwork; (d) what are the details of all contracts for the purchase of artwork, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of the artwork, (v) location where the artwork is displayed; and (e) what are the details of all contracts for the rental of artwork, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of the artwork, (v) location where the artwork is displayed, (vi) time period of the rental, (vii) monthly or yearly cost?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3062—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the additional revenue received as a result of the GST, or GST portion of the HST where applicable, being charged on the carbon tax: (a) how much revenue did the government receive from the GST being charged on the carbon tax in the 2023-24 fiscal year; and (b) if the government does not have the data requested in (a), what is the government's best estimate, or what financial projections does it use for budgeting purposes, on the total amount of revenue collected from the carbon tax in 2023-24 that would have been subject to the GST or HST, in total and broken down by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3063—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to grants and contributions provided by the government, since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department or agency, for projects located in China: (a) what was the total value of such grants and contributions, broken down by year; and (b) what are the details of all such grants and contributions, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount or value, (iii) recipient, (iv) project description, (v) city or region within China where the project is located, (vi) program under which the funding was provided, (vii) type of funding (grant, non-repayable loan, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3064—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to expenditures related to the cabinet retreat which took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from August 25 to 27, 2024, including expenses incurred by the Privy Council Office as well as by other departments or agencies, and including travel expenses incurred by ministers, ministerial staff, and others: (a) what are the total expenditures related to the retreat incurred to date; (b) what is the breakdown of the expenditures by type of expense (accommodation, hospitality, audio-visual, etc.); (c) what are the details of all expenditures in excess of \$1,000, including, for each, the (i) amount, (ii) vendor, (iii) description of the goods or services provided; and (d) what are the details of all travel expenses incurred by ministers and their staff, broken down by individual, including, for each, the (i) title, (ii) amount spent on airfare, (iii) amount spent on other transportation, (iv) amount spent on accommodation, (v) hotel or venue name, (vi) amount spent on meals or per diems, (vii) other expenses, broken down by type?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3065—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to government expenditures on "other furniture and fixtures including parts" (Treasury Board code 1246 or similar), since April 1, 2022, and broken down by fiscal year: (a) what was the total amount spent on such services, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of the services, (v) details of how the contract was awarded (sole-sourced or competitive bid)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3066—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to the CRA and small businesses which qualify for the small business deduction: what was the total amount paid by small businesses in federal corporate taxes, broken down by each of the last five fiscal years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3067—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to government expenditures on "office furniture and furnishings, including parts" (Treasury Board code 1231 or similar), since April 1, 2022, and broken down by fiscal year: (a) what was the total amount spent on such services, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of the services, (v) details of how the contract was awarded (sole-sourced or competitive bid)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3069—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to communication and meetings between the former Attorney General of Canada and the Chief Justice of Canada from January 2020 to June 2022, and the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) and the Chief Justice of Canada during the same period: (a) how many times did the Attorney General and Chief Justice communicate with each other; (b) how many times did the PMO and Chief Justice communicate with each other; (c) what are the details of each communication in (a) and (b), including, the (i) date, (ii) subject, (iii) names of the people included in the communication, (iv) type of communication (e.g. email, phone, text, memorandum, messaging software, video conference, in person meeting, fax); (d) how many meetings occurred between (i) the Attorney General and the Chief Justice, (ii) the PMO and the Chief Justice; and (e) what are the details for each meeting in (d), including the (i) date, (ii) time, (iii) location, (iv) purpose of the meeting, (v) topics discussed in the meeting, (vi) meeting attendees, (vii) outcome of the meeting?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, when it comes to the issue of double-dipping, we know that the company owned by the member for Edmonton Centre, Global Health Imports, is still eligible to bid on government contracts, even though that company has engaged in indigenous identity fraud by falsely claiming to be indigenous owned based on false claims that the former minister was indigenous.

It is our position in the Conservative Party that this company, owned by a member of the Liberal caucus and responsible for indigenous identity fraud, should no longer be eligible to bid on government contracts. We are calling on the government to actually take this issue of indigenous identity fraud seriously, to respond to the expectations of indigenous leaders and to protect taxpayers' dollars.

Would the member from the NDP who just spoke agree with us that Global Health Imports, which is owned by the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre, should no longer be eligible for government contracts?

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Of course, Madam Speaker. I think most Canadians would be, as I am, amazed that a minister of the Crown could even have a company still operating that was getting government contracts.

I know when I signed on as a member of Parliament, I went through a pretty serious vetting process where they asked me about what interests not only I might have but my wife. My wife had a little contract with the federal government that she was just wrapping up. We had to report all that. They said things would be much harder if I was a minister, so to find out what has been going on with the member for Edmonton Centre has been a real eye-opener for me. I could not believe this was happening. It is another thing to add on the layer of the question around indigeneity. Yes, it has been amazing.

If the government would only act on this motion we are debating today, that someone cannot have a government job and do the same work by contract at the same time, then that would all be moot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to go back to a particular aspect of my colleague's speech that caught my attention. If I understood correctly, he talked about problems at the border. If I am not mistaken, he cited the Eastern Townships region as an example. I represent a riding in the Eastern Townships.

Here is another example of mismanagement. I have to say that the Liberal government is as much at fault as the government in charge at the time of the border cuts, and I mean the Conservatives. Now, there is a new president-elect of the United States who has personally announced that he is going to deport people. Mayors along the border in my area are deeply concerned. They do not believe that this government is taking this threat seriously. Even in committee, my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—

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Matap dia was told that the borders would be managed if and when a problem arises.

Can my colleague tell us how clear it is that now is the time for action, not for a reduction in hours at the border, as announced by the Liberal government?

• (1745)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[*English*]

What I can say is that I am continually hearing about the issues around the CBSA and border crossings in my riding and how there has been an ongoing series of cuts. We are not protecting our borders more than we used to; we are protecting them less. They are shortening the hours these border crossings are open. That will only, I imagine, make people want to try to get around those crossings. This is the west. There are all sorts of little roads along the border with barbed wire fence gates on them.

What we need is, I think, a really serious look at how we are funding the CBSA to do the work it has to do to protect our borders, to control the traffic of goods back and forth across the border. We just are not taking that seriously.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up with my colleague because when it comes to not caring about our borders and keeping people safe, Stephen Harper and the former Conservative government that cut 1,100 jobs from border services should step forward. Stephen Harper cut the sniffer dog program. What do we need sniffer dogs for? Well, to smell out the drugs that are coming across the border. Stephen Harper did not care. He cut the undercover teams that were going in to deal with the international criminal gangs who were using our borders. Now that we are living with the results, with massive levels of gun violence and fentanyl gangs coming into our country, the Conservatives are lighting their hair on fire.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what he thinks of this quote from Jean-Pierre Fortin, the national president of the Customs and Immigration Union, who stated that as a result of the Conservative plan, "More child pornography entering the country, more weapons, illegal drugs, will pass through our borders, not to mention terrorists and sexual predators and hardened criminals."

Why does my colleague think Stephen Harper wanted to subject the Canadian people to that just to save a few bucks?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, when I visited the border crossing at Osoyoos, British Columbia and Oroville, Washington, one of the bigger border crossings in the country, agents were so excited because they had actually intercepted someone smuggling guns across the border, I think for the first time. They had a sniffer dog and all kinds of things, but because they are so short-staffed, they discovered this only because they were watching out for this particular individual; when he did cross the border, they paid special attention to him.

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There are also five small border crossings in my riding. This is one of the big border crossings, but because it is so short-staffed, the agents just simply cannot give attention to these things. This is where the problem with guns is really coming into Canada: at our borders.

There are all sorts of other issues. The member mentioned drugs. There are also invasive mussels, which are a huge concern in the southern interior of British Columbia. These are things that we really have to pay attention to, and it costs money. I know that Conservatives do not like spending money, but this is what we have to do collectively to make our border safer.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it certainly appears to me that under the Liberal government, not only has the public sector bloomed by 40%, but the outsourcing and contracting have increased hugely as well. However, I do not know where the people are actually working, because the backlog in immigration is just as long as ever, and there are the same issues in my riding with CBSA's missing resources.

I definitely think that we need to take a look at no double dipping, but in addition to that, the allocation of resources in the government looks like it needs tuning. I wonder what the member thinks about that.

• (1750)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I totally agree. When we speak of immigration, I do not know what adjective to use, but most of my staff's time is spent on immigration issues simply because people have a right to get their visa or their permanent residency status worked on. However, it just seems to go into a void, and months pass without any apparent action.

Maybe it is a combination of managing how it is done and of simply needing more staff. If we stopped all the rampant contracting out for other projects, who knows how many staff we could hire and really train up to do the job on a daily basis, which would get things running smoothly again.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to this concurrence motion.

I cannot help but wonder why we are still stuck in this same place.

Conservatives continue to insist that we cannot get on with regular business of this House and discuss really important measures. For example, I would love to hear the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan's position on the recent announcements that were made by the government in terms of providing tax relief for all Canadians during a time of the year when people tend to be stretching the money they have.

We certainly know that, after inflation has come back down to where it is supposed to be, there are many households out there that are not realizing the decrease of inflation yet, and the measures that the government introduced last week are meant to address that. I really wish we could be talking about those, but we are not. Instead, we are in a constant filibuster from Conservatives and it does not even seem to be on one particular issue.

First, the Conservatives were filibustering on a privilege motion because, according to them, it was so incredibly important that we deal with this issue immediately. Then, at every opportunity they get, they introduce a concurrence motion, and it is a motion that basically prevents us from continuing on, even with the main item that they are using for the purpose of filibustering.

I am not surprised to see Conservatives act in that manner, but it certainly is surprising to see, at least from my perspective, the lengths to which the NDP and the Bloc Québécois members have allowed this to go on. There are really important things for us to be discussing, but instead, right now, we have been talking and will talk for three hours' worth of precious House time about a report that contains one entire sentence that was tabled back in March 2024, which was about nine months ago, and that is what we are doing here right now.

In any event, I will speak to the substance of this single-sentence motion. I would like to respond to the motion by the public accounts committee that, "calls on the government to prohibit any government employee from simultaneously working as an external contractor."

Let me begin by saying the procurement of goods and services is a normal part of governing, and is essential to meeting the everyday needs of Canadians. Doing this right is crucial to maintaining public trust in government. Public servants play an important role in upholding core values of our democracy, such as accountability and trust, and the government has a framework of rules and regulations designed to guide the actions and behaviours of federal employees and safeguard the integrity of the public service.

In my time today, I would like to discuss some of the tools that pertain to the conflict of interest, particularly the Directive on Conflict of Interest, and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. To start, let us consider the Directive on Conflict of Interest. The directive sets out the requirements for persons employed by the government to help identify, prevent, report and resolve situations of "real, apparent or potential conflict of interest and conflict of duties". The organizations are expected to "have the appropriate mechanisms in place to help individuals identify, report and...resolve real, apparent or potential conflict of interest" that may arise during and after their employment in the public service.

The objective of the directive is to uphold "the values and ethics of the public sector and the public interest." With regard to public servants bidding on government contracts, the directive states that federal employees should refrain "from having private interests and engaging in outside employment...that may...impair their ability" to be objective and impartial. They must also advise their deputy head of outside employment and activities that could result in a real or perceived conflict of interest.

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Public servants are also required to seek “approval of their deputy head before entering into a contractual agreement with the Government of Canada for which they are receiving any direct or indirect benefit or income”. Moreover, it is a condition of employment for public servants to fully and truthfully self-disclose any real, apparent or potential conflicts of interest.

● (1755)

All attestation information provided by employees is subject to verification and audit, and making a false statement would constitute a breach of the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. The consequences for non-compliance are clearly outlined in the directive. It states that anyone employed in the federal public service who has not complied with its requirements “may be subject to...disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment.”

I would now like to turn to the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector, which is another crucial piece of the government's oversight regime. The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector sets out expected behaviours so that public servants at all levels have a common understanding of expected behaviours to demonstrate the values expressed in the code. Indeed, the code's core values, which are respect for democracy, respect for people, integrity, stewardship and excellence, are the pillars of a healthy and effective federal public service. They are the key to maintaining public trust.

The code's integrity values state:

Public Servants shall serve the public interest by:

3.1 Acting at all times with integrity and in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny, an obligation that may not be fully satisfied by simply acting within the law.

3.2 Never using their official roles to inappropriately obtain an advantage for themselves or to advantage or disadvantage others.

3.3 Taking all possible steps to prevent and resolve any real, apparent or potential conflicts of interest between their official responsibilities and their private affairs in favour of the public interest.

3.4 Acting in such a way as to maintain their employer's trust.

In short, public servants must act in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny. What is more, adhering to the code “is a condition of employment” for all federal employees, “regardless of their level or position”, and any breach of its values or expected behaviours can give rise to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. By committing to the values of respect for democracy and respect for people, integrity, stewardship and excellence, and by adhering to the expected behaviours, public servants contribute to public confidence in the integrity of the public service as a whole.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that every organization in the federal public sector is also required to have its own code of conduct that is consistent with the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. The organizational codes outline expected behaviours specific to each organization's mandate and work environment. Therefore, public servants are not only expected to abide by the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector and demonstrate the values in their actions and behaviour, but they must also abide by the organization's code of conduct.

I will mention the PSPC Code of Conduct for Procurement, which also plays a role here. It outlines clear expectations for vendors and subcontractors with respect to human rights, labour standards, conflict of interest and environmental responsibility. As a result, it is not only the government but also the vendors and subcontractors who are committed to upholding and promoting the ethical and environmental benchmarks that Canadians expect. In addition, the government's integrity regime holds suppliers accountable for misconduct, helps foster ethical business practices, ensures due process for suppliers and upholds the public trust in the procurement process.

The integrity of the federal public service is of utmost concern to the government. Public servants share a deep and common commitment to serving Canadians and maintaining public confidence in our democratic institutions. The comprehensive rules and policies in place are there to guide the ethical conduct of public servants and to ensure that those who act unethically are held to account.

As indicated in my read remarks, I concur with the sentiment of—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Who wrote them?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that it definitely was not the same Conservative staffer who writes every single speech that I get to listen to on a daily basis from Conservatives, and it certainly did not come from AI either.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: We know that Conservatives spend a lot of time speaking in the House. As a matter of fact—

● (1800)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would say to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that if he has anything to contribute, he should wait until the appropriate time to do so.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There will be an opportunity for 10 minutes of questions and comments. He knows the rules and I hope he will abide by them.

I would also ask the hon. deputy government House leader not to engage with others who are making comments on the other side until the appropriate time.

The hon. deputy government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I find it hard at times with respect to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. He promised years ago to invite me to his podcast so we could debate there instead of the crosstalk like this, but he has yet to do that. I am still waiting for the invitation.

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I find it very interesting, especially when the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan asked who wrote them. If he listened to the speeches we have been subjected to over the last 29 or 30 sitting days by the Conservatives, here is a fun fact: During this whole filibustering exercise that has been going on, over 190 speeches have been given in the House. At last count, 172 of them were by Conservatives. It is only Conservatives who are speaking and it is the same speech written over and over again. Thank God AI came along when it did, because they are able to just ask AI to change up the speech a bit, to throw another twist into it, and they have another speech produced just like that, instantly. Then they come in here, like the robots they are, and read out that entire speech. I find it very fascinating—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member knows he cannot do indirectly what he is not allowed to do directly. I challenge him that the speeches that are generated by AI are not changed but the same dumbed-down repetition time after time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I think this is more a point of debate.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I can still hear some members, some of whom I have called out, still making comments. I would ask them to please hold off. We have a little over eight minutes to go before the hon. member finishes his speech. Then there will be an opportunity for 10 minutes of questions and comments.

The hon. deputy government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the point is that we are here today on the concurrence motion because of Conservatives' unwillingness to let us vote on a motion that they tabled. Just think about that for a second.

For anybody out there who might be watching the debate, who may have just happened to come across the channel and who is just watching for a second, I want to tell them about what has been going on in their House of Commons. Conservatives, 29 sitting days ago, introduced a motion calling on the House to send a particular order from the Speaker to committee so the committee could deal with it there, and then the committee would send it back to the House.

Rather than actually letting us vote on their motion, the Conservatives have put up over 170 speakers, of which there have been only approximately 190 in total. The remaining political parties have put the rest of the speakers up. The Conservatives have put up over 170 speakers, but that is not where their filibustering ends. They have also moved concurrence motion after concurrence motion.

Last week we were debating a concurrence motion on a report that had been tabled three years ago. We are now debating a one-sentence report from a committee that was tabled in March of this year. Conservatives are treating the House as though it were a joke. They are not letting us do the business we need to do.

I will conclude my remarks where I began them. There are so many things we could be talking about right now. We could be talking about meaningful ways to impact the lives of Canadians. We cannot do that because Conservatives are absolutely refusing to let us. I am sure Conservatives have a position on the government's legislation that it indicated last week it would be introducing, on GST and the worker rebate. I would love to hear what their position is.

I would love for the Conservatives to let the issue go to committee and let us actually do what they are asking us to do through their motion so we can debate the legislation that was just announced. I would love to know whether the Leader of the Opposition will free them and let them vote their conscience on it.

I would love to know whether their constituents support removing the GST for a two-month period, at a time when Canadians could particularly use it, at a time when a lot of small businesses and a lot of restaurants, in particular independent restaurants, which typically see downtime in January and February, could really benefit from removing the GST and seeing more people during those two particular months to help with their businesses and to help our economy.

I am sure that the vast majority of people, whatever number, as big or perhaps as small as it may be, who are watching the debate right now would rather listen to a debate on that subject than on a one-sentence report that was moved in a committee in March. The report must have been so important to Conservatives that they had to wait nine months before they could actually move a motion on it.

That is where we are right now. We are going to continue to listen to Conservatives, but there genuinely is a way out, which is for the Bloc or the NDP to say that maybe they have gone a little too far, that maybe they have done their bit, that they have pushed it.

I know that the NDP cares about the issue, in particular what the government announced last week. It was the leader of the NDP who insisted that he take credit for all of it the day before it was even introduced. He had to be the first one out of the gate. That is fine. The New Democrats want to be the adults in the room and work with the government. Let them have the credit. They can go ahead and take it, but could we at least have a discussion about what is important to Canadians?

I know that the NDP, and the Bloc for that matter, knows that the procedural tactics mean absolutely nothing to Canadians, but both of those parties are just petrified of the perception that they might be working with the government. People come up to me in my community and ask what is going on in Parliament, saying that we were working and that it was working so well for so long, that we were getting stuff done here, getting new legislation, bringing in pharmacare, dental care and all of this stuff, and that now it is like nothing.

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• (1805)

All I can really say is that, yes, we had a great relationship with the NDP. We were able to do stuff together. It is not a coincidence that when the New Democrats decided they did not want to play ball anymore and wanted to throw their bikes in the ditch and go home, which was back in August, suddenly this place became dysfunctional. That is when all this happened.

• (1810)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure my hon. colleague has been dumped many times in his life. I do not think he should be blaming people who are smart enough to leave that relationship for his problems.

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

The hon. deputy government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have had my heart broken many times. I can assure the member that this incident with the NDP does not measure up.

In conclusion—

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I just want clarification. When the breakup happened, was it at the time of a by-election?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): These are points of debate. I would ask members to please hold off, because we are nearing the period for questions and comments.

The hon. deputy government House leader has two minutes and 52 seconds left.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will only use 30 seconds to plug a band I recently saw on Wolfe Island, in my riding. It is the Grievous Angels. The member for Timmins—James Bay is the lead in this band. They are really great, and it was a great opportunity. I was so thrilled he came to my riding and was playing there.

I would encourage anybody out there to see the Grievous Angels anytime they have an opportunity to do so. I now understand that the member for Timmins—James Bay's real passion in life is music, and perhaps this was just second fiddle to that, but good for him. I know he is not going to run again. I encourage him to continue with his music career. If he is ever coming through Kingston again, he should make sure I know so I can see him again.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Timmins—James Bay has claimed the Liberals and the NDP have broken up, but I think there is some evidence to the contrary. I will be cautious extending that analogy and describing exactly how there is evidence to the contrary, but I think there is evidence.

Here is why the privilege debate is important, to directly address comments the member made. Some \$400 million of taxpayer money was essentially handed out among Liberal friends, people voting to give money to their own companies, with totally outrageous conflicts of interest persisting under the NDP-Liberal government. The House agreed to order the production of certain documents in relation to this affair. We have been very clear that this ends right this

minute if the government agrees to hand over the documents. The reason the House is in this position is that the government refuses to hand over the documents.

We are not actually debating the privilege issue right now; we are debating a concurrence motion. The concurrence motion is aimed at preventing a government employee from simultaneously being an external contractor. It makes no sense for someone to receive the benefits of contracting while being a government employee. Again, why are we debating this motion? It is because the government opposes this proposal. A majority of the House supports it; the government opposes it.

Would the member agree to support this concurrence motion and implement this proposal? Then we can move forward in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the good news is that this concurrence motion is time-allocated, so it is going to be voted on eventually.

In my speech, I spent a solid eight or nine minutes noting specifically the checks, balances and measures in place for any public servant, that they have accountability and that they have to inform their supervisor of the activities they are engaging in. Those are the kinds of things we need to do. When people go against the code of conduct, they need to be held accountable. I even indicated some of the ways in which they would be held accountable.

To the member's preamble, where he talked about the reason we are in this privilege debate, although I disagree with some of the premise behind his rationale as to Liberal insiders, I certainly share concerns about the issue as a whole. However, the RCMP specifically said that if it gets information in this manner, it may never be able to use it. It also said that it has the ability to gather information on its own, so we are taking the advice of the RCMP. The Speaker did too. He specifically told us to send this to PROC and deal with it there. That is what we want to do.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am always amazed at my colleague from Kingston and the Islands' ability to play the victim. Every time I hear him, he says that the poor government is trapped by this question of privilege, that the infamous Bloc Québécois, with the help of the NDP, will not help break the impasse in the House and that it is appalling.

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He does not seem to understand that he is part of a minority government and that it is possible to negotiate something in a minority government. The government acted in such bad faith when it made its proposal last week. For ages, we have been calling on the government to increase old age security, and the Liberals voted for that. We are also asking it to ensure that the issue of supply management moves forward.

Last week, the Liberals instead proposed giving \$250 to people who do not need it, to people who will earn \$149,000 a year. They will be giving them \$250, but then they are going to tell seniors to deal with their own problems. It is rather difficult to negotiate and to act in good faith with people who are this mediocre.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am not suggesting I am the government's victim. Who are the real victims in all of this? The victims are Canadians. They are the ones not having their representatives doing work for them for 29 sitting days while the Conservatives have jammed up the House until we "call a carbon tax election", like we hear them say over and over. At some point, I think everybody has to realize it is time to move on.

If the member is genuine when he says he wants to talk about seniors, that is great. If we get out of this privilege debate, perhaps the Bloc can bring forward a motion specifically about seniors and we can have a discussion. I would love to talk about seniors and OAS and what the government and the Bloc are proposing and why I might not like their members' ideas and why they might not like our ideas. In the meantime, we are listening to AI-generated speeches from the Conservatives.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about how this is normal procurement and every government does it. Under the Conservatives, we saw procurement to highly paid external consulting companies double. We have now seen it quadruple under the Liberals. This is the new normal: the rush to the trough by Liberal and Conservative insiders.

In this case, for ArriveCAN, we saw current public servants getting contracts, indigenous set-asides going to non-indigenous businesses, fraud, and security permits given to people who were not eligible. These are task authorizations and put Canadian security at risk. We learned of former public servants crossing over to work for these big firms. We learned of Liberal and Conservative former cabinet ministers serving as managing directors of companies like Deloitte. We saw doubling and tripling of commissions. By the time people actually did the job, at times 50% of the money had gone to commissions.

The member talked about normal procurement. If this is going to be normal, this economic leakage and rip-off of Canadian taxpayers, when are the Liberals and Conservatives going to get together and put an end to this absolutely abysmal destruction of the Canadian public service by outsourcing it to these external, for-profit companies? When is it going to end?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I love how the member twists the words. I did not say "normal procurement" or "this is normal procurement". What I said was "procurement is normal", and there is a big difference. Procurement happens. It is a part of

what we do, how government operates, and at times it can be in the best interest to procure services. We accept and believe in that.

As I indicated in my speech, we also have a directive on the conflict of interest and values, and a code of conduct for the public sector. To the member's point, if people are abusing their positions or are doing things they should not be doing in contravention to those two documents, then they should be held accountable. I do not think we would find anybody in this room who would suggest otherwise. It is really important that people are held to the highest standards we set out in those documents, but the reality is that sometimes people are not. When that happens, they have to be dealt with. I believe that is the case, to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and his question earlier.

Yes, individuals have to be held accountable. Let us get on with it by sending this over to PROC, having PROC get to the bottom of the documents issue and sending it back to the House. That is how we function. However, Conservatives are not interested in that. They want to delay and obstruct so they can claim this place does not work so they can justify an election.

• (1820)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member suggested at one point that the debates we are having in the House are meaningless to Canadians and that we could be engaged in meaningful activity. I suggest that the misappropriation of \$400 million is not meaningless and Parliament getting to the bottom of it is very valuable to every single Canadian. He also seemed to suggest that he does not clearly understand why a government employee would not be entitled to receive a contract to provide goods or a service to the very department he works in.

Does the member across the way have a clear understanding of what constitutes a conflict of interest?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I went through it. I read it out. I do not think the member was listening to me. I went through the document in my speech and highlighted the important parts of it.

The member tries to conflate the issues. He said that I said this is not important and what Liberals have been talking about the whole time is strictly the issue. I would love to get to the bottom of the issue. I would love to figure out what the problem is. Unfortunately, the Conservatives will not let us do that because they are filibustering their own motion. They tabled a motion to send this to committee to let the committee study it. They then put up 172 speakers, and counting.

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Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on the concurrence motion for the 37th report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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

This report states the following: “That the committee report to the House that it calls on the government to prohibit any government employee from simultaneously working as an external contractor.” This report is short and straight to the point. This practice of double-dipping by public servants is obviously unethical and should not be allowed to occur. Unfortunately, this Liberal government allows this practice across all departments.

I would like to begin by giving some context to this report and how it came about.

During our study of the arrive scam scandal, we uncovered a number of issues in the contracting of this app, not the least of which was the case of a government contractor being allowed to simultaneously work as a public servant. David Yeo, CEO of Dalian, was caught double-dipping. In fact, the day that he started as a public servant at the Department of National Defence, his company signed a big contract with that same department. His own signature was on the contract, and no one raised any issues. Under this government, this is seen as perfectly acceptable, just business as usual.

Now, while scandalous, this was just one case, and it could have just been the one that slipped through the cracks. However, when members dug into this situation, when we asked the government to advise the committee on how many public servants were simultaneously working as government contractors, we were shocked to find out that dozens of public servants have been allowed to do the very same thing. In other words, it has become commonplace.

Most Canadians would look at this and see the obvious conflict of interest in being both a public servant and a government contractor, but not the Liberals. As I said, it is business as usual to allow double-dipping; after all, we have seen sitting cabinet ministers who have been found guilty of ethics violations and many cases of Liberal insiders getting sweetheart deals in government contracts.

Currently, the House is seized with a privilege motion, calling on the government to provide the House with unredacted documents in the case of SDTC. More specifically, the current Liberal environment minister, who used to work for Cycle Capital as a lobbyist, still holds shares in this company, one of the largest beneficiaries of this fund that had insider access to funding to businesses it was invested in. We need look no further than the latest scandal with the member for Edmonton Centre, former minister of employment, who was forced to resign after months of controversy surrounding his medical supply business, GHI. More specifically, it is a company that falsely claimed to be an indigenous company in order to access funding that was set aside as part of an indigenous procurement program. So, is it any wonder that the practice of allowing public servants to bid and be awarded government contracts simultaneously is allowed to continue? Within this context, it is obvious why Conservatives feel the need to press this issue.

It is a fact that the government has grown the public service massively, but instead of having these tens of thousands of public servants do the work in-house, this government is outsourcing the work and, in some cases, paying public servants as government contractors to do the work at an inflated price. The practice of outsourcing is contributing to the massive costs of this Liberal government. The government must take immediate steps to crack down on double-dipping. It must address its failure to rein in this practice and take real action against it. Unfortunately, there is little hope of seeing this Liberal government take meaningful action. Even if it decides to implement new rules, we know that it will likely not enforce them, rendering them ineffective.

● (1825)

I would like to quote what Roch Huppé said about the arrive scam scandal, when he appeared at committee, which touches on this issue:

Canadians expect the Government of Canada to be well managed. They also expect their government to have the rules and controls in place for the sound management of their tax dollars. Audits like the one performed by the Auditor General of Canada on ArriveCAN are important instruments to ensure that those expectations continue to be met.

The findings of the Auditor General are clear and sobering. Requirements and good management practices were not followed. As the Auditor General has noted several times, the rules were there, but compliance was not.

He went on to say:

Again, as the Auditor General has noted, we do not believe that more rules are the answer. Procurement is already complex enough. Rather, this issue serves as a clear reminder that departments and agencies need to ensure that they are placing the utmost importance on ensuring that procurements are fair, open and transparent and withstand the closest public scrutiny.

This gets to the heart of the matter. The answer to these issues is not to add more rules that the government will not enforce. It is simply to enforce the rules that are already in place. We do not need the government making more rules to help its insider friends. We just need a government that is willing to enforce the rules and to find and address corruption. For example, we saw this when the President of the Treasury Board proclaimed that the government would now make sure that contractors actually fulfilled the contract before paying them. This was already a rule, just one that the government was not enforcing.

Another example of a pre-existing rule, which the government reinstated, was that it would now first determine if work could be done in-house before outsourcing it. This rule could have stopped the practice of double-dipping from ever becoming an issue, but the government failed to enforce it. The issue behind the report we are discussing today is this: We have a government that is failing to fulfill its role and to enforce the rules that it has in place, which are meant to ensure fairness and transparency in the procurement process and to fight corruption. The Liberals were not actively seeking to address double-dipping and shut it down. They waited until it became a big scandal and then only did the bare minimum to address the issues. Once the attention waned, it could return to business as usual.

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Canadians deserve a government that is committed to accountability. We need a government that cares enough to seek out corruption and snuff it out before it can become widespread. We need a government that will enforce the rules that are already in place. Unfortunately, we have members of the government who are trying to pass the time until they can get their pensions and check out. They are more concerned with pushing the election date back a week than dealing with corruption, which they have allowed to fester throughout the public service.

This report is really a no-brainer and should have support from all parties. However, given the way the Liberals continue to dig in their heels when it comes to being transparent and accountable, we will likely not get any resolution to this issue from the corrupt Liberal government. We need a change in government in order to implement accountability across the government bureaucracy and ensure that Canadians are getting good value for money.

● (1830)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with my colleague on the government operations committee. We saw so much, along with so much dysfunction. However, we also know that the outsourcing to external consultants at highly paid consulting firms, which doubled under the Conservatives, has quadrupled. It has run away out of control under the Liberals.

We also know up here that there has been a culture instituted in this place. People come to work on the Hill with their ultimate goal being to go and work for those consulting companies; public servants retire from the public service and then go work for those consulting companies and make exorbitant amounts of money. That also happened under the Conservatives.

What does my colleague think her party will do to stop this culture of external outsourcing and this pathway of bringing insider information and then profiting from it?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I am reminded of my colleague's time on the government operations committee, when he actually helped the Liberals cover up their McKinsey scandal. The Liberals refused to hand over unredacted documents on their close relationship with McKinsey, and the NDP helped them filibuster, when Conservatives tried to raise the issue in the House. It is difficult to reconcile that member's behaviour with his self-proclaimed desire to crack down on outsourcing when he was playing defence for the Liberals outsourcing to McKinsey.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague works so hard and gets to the bottom of a lot of these issues. We have heard today, throughout this debate, that the Liberals are saying they have all read the conflict of interest guidelines and that employees have all read the conflict of interest guidelines. However, they simply do not follow them, so it seems to me as though there is a root issue in the culture of the government and of public sector employees who would double dip knowing that it was not right.

What would the member have to say about that?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the great work that she does in holding the government to account at every opportunity she gets.

This motion is about stopping double-dipping. There are instances where outsourcing may be necessary, but it has never been necessary to outsource to public servants. That work should be done in-house. She makes a very good point about the conflict of interest guidelines that are in place.

I will just quickly quote a very recent post by one of my colleagues. He wrote, "SHOCKING

"The 'Conflict of Interest' Policy at Trudeau's Green Slush Fund allowed Board members to buy & sell securities WITHIN DAYS of a funding decision.

"This is akin to INSIDER TRADING.

"Corruption not only happened, it was the OFFICIAL POLICY".

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member named the Prime Minister, and I would remind members that they are not to use the first or last names of members of the House.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question, after hearing the speech and comments by my colleague from Terrebonne, who did a great job explaining the infamous concept of double-dipping. She also explained that the problem of hiring outside consultants stems from the fact that, under the Conservatives, the number of public servants was reduced to such an extent that it created a problem. The Liberals then mismanaged that problem, of course.

However, it is clear that making cuts for the sake of making cuts and saving money, as was done at the time, has an impact on services to the public. In the end, we are in catch-up mode. We agree that this catch-up is really not being done in the right way.

Does my colleague agree that, under a Conservative government, it would be wise to avoid cutting the number of civil servants too much, in order to maintain services to the public?

● (1835)

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, over the two years that I have been a member of the government operations and estimates committee, we have been studying scandal after scandal, and what it all boils down to is whether we have a government that is serious about the role that it has been elected to undertake in managing both the public service and all of the contracting rules that are in place. It does not appear to be willing to do that, and in fact, it is even willing to outsource when we have public servants who could very well do the work.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the good citizens of Brantford—Brant, and it is a privilege to be speaking to the concurrence debate. Before I get into the merits of the concurrence motion, I would like to recap how we got here.

The ArriveCAN scam is nothing short of a financial debacle, one that has ballooned from a modest estimate of \$80,000 to almost \$60 million, and that is only a guesstimate, as per the Auditor General. It was just not an accounting error; it was a result of chronic mismanagement and an appalling lack of oversight. The Liberals, from the Prime Minister on down, are directly responsible, and have been throughout their nine years of governance, for a waste of taxpayer dollars on an out-of-control project that has lined the pockets of well-connected consultants while Canadians are left picking up the tab.

The tale begins in November 2019, when a small, two-person, consulting firm called GC Strategies, operating out of a basement, was brought in for a seemingly innocuous task. It did not stay small for long. Run by Kristian Firth and his partner, Darren Anthony, the business quickly escalated from a low-level consulting firm to the chief contractor behind the bloated arrive scam app, securing multi-million dollar contracts at a staggering rate.

When all was said and done, the total cost exceeded almost \$59 million, far beyond the original estimate. The problem, however, is not just the ballooning costs; it is also the complete absence of transparency. The very connections that GC Strategies built with senior government officials seem to have played a pivotal role in securing and expanding their contracts. By early 2020, GC Strategies was not only on the payroll but was also actively seeking more government funding, all while working behind the scenes to further entrench its position within the bureaucracy.

Despite growing concerns about the company's improper involvement and its rapid accumulation of taxpayer-funded contracts, it continued to rake in millions. By April 2021, it was celebrating the one-year anniversary of ArriveCAN with government officials, toasting its success during a virtual whisky tasting.

Meanwhile, costs continued to climb. By 2022, it became glaringly obvious that the project was not just over budget; it was spiralling out of control. By that time, \$9 million of the \$54 million spent had gone directly to GC Strategies. Even as public outrage grew, with citizens and experts demanding accountability, the government stood idly by. When calls for an audit of GC Strategies gained momentum, the Liberal government voted against it, further demonstrating its unwillingness to take any meaningful action.

Finally, in late 2023, more than four years into the debacle, the CBSA severed ties with GC Strategies and its partners, but the damage had already been done. The Auditor General's report revealed that the companies involved had not been properly vetted for conflicts of interest, raising serious questions about the integrity of the entire project.

The situation deepens when we look at the troubling revelations surrounding senior officials involved in the project. For instance, Cameron MacDonald, a CBSA official, testified about a heated call that he had with another official, Minh Doan, who had a conversa-

tion with the then minister of public safety, who admitted to being unhappy with the media coverage surrounding the selection of GC Strategies and demanded someone's head on a platter. As a result, there were no official records of communications between CBSA and GC Strategies; there were only vague emails about pricing.

It gets worse. I mentioned Minh Doan, who, despite his high-ranking position and expertise in computers, mysteriously lost over four years' worth of emails after a request for information was made. Conveniently, he claimed that his laptop battery change led to a technical glitch that caused his emails to disappear, an absurd explanation that would be laughable if the consequences were not so dire.

Mr. MacDonald and Antonio Utano, two mid-level officials, also got suspended without pay despite having flagged serious concerns about the lack of oversight and accountability in the project. The government's response was that they were punished for exposing the truth. Meanwhile, high-ranking officials who should have been held accountable, including ministers, remain untouched, while the real perpetrators continue to enjoy the spoils of their corruption.

● (1840)

The AG's scathing report on the ArriveCAN app revealed what can only be described as the worst record-keeping she has ever encountered in her career. The entire contracting process was a mess. There were no clear objectives, no accountability and no one properly in charge, including the Prime Minister and the government. The list of failures is staggering, including ghost contracting, fraudulent résumé manipulation, favouritism and a complete lack of transparency. This is a textbook case of how taxpayers' dollars can be misused when corruption runs unchecked.

The Liberal government's pattern of incompetence, mismanagement and dishonesty continues to be on full display. How can Canadians trust a government that not only mishandles taxpayer money, but actively obstructs efforts to uncover the truth? This is a government that has consistently failed to demonstrate any level of responsibility or transparency.

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This brings us to the report, and why it is so critical and crucial. It is not just about exposing the incompetence and corruption within the government. It is about taking steps to ensure that this never happens again. The public accounts committee recently passed a motion calling for the government to prohibit employees from simultaneously working as external contractors. This motion came in response to a contracting company named Dalian that was paid almost \$8 million for work on the ArriveCAN project. The president of Dalian was also employed by the Department of Veteran Affairs, which funded the very contract they were working on. This was a clear case of double dipping, where a government employee profits from both their salary and taxpayer-funded contracts.

The Liberals continue to argue that they need to hire outside contractors because of a lack of internal expertise. Yet, time and again, we see government employees being paid to do the same work that they were already being paid for in their government positions. This practice not only undermines public trust, but creates a system ripe for fraud and abuse.

When Conservatives pressed witnesses about this issue during the arrive scam investigation, we learned that this practice is not even explicitly prohibited. It is merely evaluated for conflicts of interest. That will never be good enough. We need clear, enforceable rules that prevent this kind of abuse from happening in the first place.

In conclusion, it is time for the government to come clean about the full extent of its failure with the ArriveCAN app. Canadians deserve transparency and accountability. Above all, they deserve assurance that their tax dollars will no longer be misused for political favours and consultant kickbacks.

This is not just a scandal, it is a crisis of trust, and it is one that the Liberal government has yet to address in any serious, meaningful way. I urge every member of this House to stand up for the taxpayers and for the integrity of our public institutions. We cannot allow this kind of waste, corruption and incompetence to continue. We must hold those responsible accountable and ensure this never happens again.

• (1845)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I worked very closely together in covering a lot of different holes in what was going on in terms of this contract with ArriveCAN.

We saw so many problems with this one that we should examine the bigger companies and the massive contracts that they are getting, like Deloitte, which has gone up 20-fold, in terms of outsourcing since the Conservatives took government and including the Liberal government. It has run away, but nobody is putting scrutiny on the contracts going to Deloitte, despite the fact that the NDP at the government operations committee wanted Deloitte to appear so that we could get to the bottom of why it is getting such a massive increase in outsourcing. These are for-profit companies.

Would my colleague agree that we should be examining those big contracts as well, not just ArriveCAN, and that clearly there are problems, fundamentally, right through the whole process?

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, any misuse of taxpayer monies needs to be thoroughly examined by all members of the House. There is a serious lack of trust in our federal institutions. That goes back to the time the Prime Minister formed government. Any companies on the Liberal payroll, so to speak, that are funneling money into and padding their own pockets need to be severely investigated not only by Parliament but by law enforcement as well.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I would like a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, November 26, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to present a number of petitions in the House this evening.

The first petition is about taxes. Canadians are never that keen about paying their taxes, which is why Conservatives would axe the tax. This petition, though, is about tax filing.

The petitioners note that tax filing is a requirement for most Canadians, regardless of their ability to access online platforms. They note that paper filing and instructions on how to file have been available for decades. The petitioners are concerned that a recent decision of the CRA means that it will no longer print line-by-line instructions in the paper package and will impose penalties for paper filing of certain taxes, including for businesses filing GST/HST returns. This unequally disadvantages vulnerable Canadians and creates big challenges for those who do not have the same level of connectivity that most of us have.

The petitioners call on the government to remove all penalties associated with paper filing and to make available print copies of the line-by-line instructions for tax filing for anyone who requests them.

• (1850)

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, next I would like to table a petition that raises concern about the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the People's Republic of China. The petitioners begin by explaining that Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation exercises and moral teachings. It is based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

The petitioners state that 25 years ago, the CCP began a campaign of intensive persecution aimed at eradicating Falun Gong. It has included detention, forced labour, prison and torture and has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Two prominent Canadian human rights leaders, David Matas and the late David Kilgour, conducted an important investigation that revealed significant levels of organ harvesting. Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting has gathered many signatures on this issue and has highlighted it at the United Nations.

The petitioners want to see a stronger response from the Government of Canada to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and to see actions by Parliament to do all we can to deter it. Canada has already passed legislation to make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad to receive an organ taken without a person's consent. The petitioners want us to take additional steps, to the extent that we can, to stop this abhorrent practice.

CHINA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition also deals with human rights and the actions of the CCP, the Chinese Communist Party.

This petition is focused on Hong Kong. It draws the attention of the House to the fact that free and fair trials, traditional independence and the rule of law are key principles in Canada and, sadly, things that have been lost in Hong Kong. Peaceful protesters in Hong Kong have been charged and convicted of penal offences through a judiciary that is now neither impartial nor fair. Some of them have included offences under the national security act, but also under other sections of Hong Kong's penal code.

The petitioners also raise concern about the fact that Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act renders inadmissible to Canada foreign nationals who have been convicted of a foreign offence outside of Canada on the grounds of criminality. This could lead to people who have been involved in pro-democracy activity, and have actually done nothing wrong but simply advocated for their freedoms in Hong Kong, being deemed inadmissible to Canada on the basis of a failure to update our legal realities to the realities on the ground in Hong Kong.

The petitioners, therefore, call on the Government of Canada to take the following steps to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong and its impact on the legitimacy and validity of criminal convictions. They want the government to affirm its position that it would render all national security law-related charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in terms of determining inadmissibility to Canada; to create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with pro-democracy movement-related convictions may provide an explanation for such convictions, on the basis of which

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the government could grant exemptions to Hong Kong people who would otherwise be deemed inadmissible under IRPA; and to work with other like-minded governments such as the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Australia and New Zealand to collaborate around ensuring people from Hong Kong's democracy movement who are not in any real sense criminals would still be able to come to Canada, as well as to other countries to which they might wish to travel.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table another petition in support of Bill C-257, a bill that, coincidentally, stands in my name. I thank the petitioners for bringing this petition to me to table in the House.

The petitioners note that Canadians have a right to be protected against discrimination and that they can face political discrimination. While there are various other prohibited grounds of discrimination, political belief is not currently included in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Bill C-257 would add political belief or activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. In addition to protecting Canadians from discrimination, it would allow for free and open debate within Canada without people being worried about consequences.

The petitioners want the House to support Bill C-257 and also defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political beliefs.

• (1855)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Another member wishes to table a petition. The hon. member has had an opportunity to table quite a few of them, so I will allow the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands to table a petition.

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will interrupt the 15 minutes of the day the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan tables petitions and table one of my own.

My petition is from residents in my riding who are concerned that radio and television journalists and the loss of local programming are impacting them negatively. They are bringing to the attention of the government the crucial role of local coverage and why it is so important.

Therefore, the petitioners are asking the government to extend the Canadian journalism labour tax credit to include radio and television; support Canadian-owned media by dedicating 70% of federal advertising dollars toward local radio, TV, print and digital media; and eliminating tax deductions for advertising purchased on foreign-owned Internet-delivered media sites and services.

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HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I thank the people who have taken the time to write out their concerns to the government in the form of this petition.

I think members are no strangers to how the Chinese Communist government in Beijing views religious minorities, whether it be the Uyghur population or Falun Gong practitioners. The petitioners are most concerned about a horrible practice. In this case, it is called forced organ harvesting.

Essentially, the petitioners would like to see a resolution passed to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs; amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting, which I think most Canadians would agree is against the law; have specific sanctions in law; and publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting, which was mentioned earlier, has had over 1.5 million people from various countries sign petitions. I am glad to be representing the people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, and in this case, specifically, the petitioners who believe this is a horrible practice that should be stopped, and not just in the provision of the government in Beijing but right across the whole world.

I ask for permission to table this document in their names.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, the petitioners involved in this particular petition highlight the Falun Gong situation. They highlight that this is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline, which consists of meditation, exercise and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

As members have already brought to the House's attention, Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting has received about 1.5 million petition signatures from over 50 countries. The petition was presented to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It calls for immediate action to end the unethical practice of forced organ harvesting in China; it also calls for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong.

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In the future, I think my practice will be to scan the room first to see how many people want to present petitions. That way, I hope we will be able to get them all in.

I would again remind members to give brief remarks about their petition so that we can allow other colleagues to speak. I initially let the hon. member go because there were not too many people who rose when I called for petitions, but then there was lots of interest as people grabbed their petitions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1900)

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week I, along with other Conservatives, called on the government and the Prime Minister, to remove the Minister of Employment, the member for Edmonton Centre, from the Liberal cabinet, and that actually happened. On Wednesday, this Liberal minister left cabinet, and he did so under a major cloud of concern about various corrupt activities. Most acutely, it was revelations that his company engaged in indigenous identity fraud.

The company made the claim that it was indigenous-owned when it was not. It made that claim, because the minister, and the Liberal Party of Canada, had claimed that he, the owner of this company and a minister of the Crown, was indigenous when he was not. He has now left the cabinet. Some would say, "Is that the end of the story?"

We have been digging into this Liberal indigenous contracting scandal for months, and it is a scandal that includes this former minister, who is still a member of the Liberal caucus, but it is much wider than this. It reflects the phenomenon, and we are hearing from the Assembly of First Nations, that a majority of contracts that have been set aside that are supposed to benefit indigenous entrepreneurs and communities are actually going to shell companies. We have this endemic identity fraud and manipulation of criteria within the indigenous contracting program designed to allow privileged, elite, non-indigenous insiders to take advantage of contracts that are supposed to be going to indigenous people.

It is very interesting. When this program was created, there were many existing indigenous organizations that had been putting together lists of indigenous businesses, but instead of working with those existing organizations and building off those existing lists, this Liberal government decided it was going to create its own separate list where it was going to decide which businesses are indigenous, and that it was actually going to allow on that list companies and organizations that are actually not on anybody else's list.

There are instances of companies or joint ventures where all, if not the vast majority, of the benefit, is going to non-indigenous, elite insiders who are taking advantage of these programs. They do not show up on any of the other lists of indigenous-led organizations, but they show up on the Government of Canada's list of so-called "indigenous businesses". That allows them to take contracts that the policy is supposed to reserve for indigenous people.

We know now that false claims about indigenous identity are not only rampant within this program, but were made by a minister of the Crown himself. Meanwhile, now that this former minister is out of cabinet, he remains a member of the Liberal caucus, but also his company continues to be eligible for government contracts. Now figure that one out.

The government should be taking fraud seriously, and that should include indigenous identity fraud, yet indigenous leaders have been telling me that they are concerned that indigenous identity fraud is not being taken seriously at all. There are all kinds of instances of people making false claims for their own advantage of indigenous identity in order to take things that have been promised to indigenous people. This is another case of people in the government, like the member for Edmonton Centre, who are still able to take advantage of government procurement. His company, Global Health Imports, is still eligible to bid on government contracts.

The question to the government should be why it has continued to allow systematic abuse in this program. Why has it continued to allow non-indigenous people to steal benefits that have been promised to indigenous people? Why in particular is the government continuing to allow companies like Global Health Imports, which we know now committed indigenous identity fraud, to access government contracts?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, determining and affirming one's indigenous identity is deeply personal and complex. It is not for the House to act as the arbiter of anyone's identity. We must acknowledge that indigenous heritage and identity are not always straightforward. Many indigenous people in Canada face challenges in tracing their roots due to historical injustices, including systemic efforts to erase indigenous cultures and identities. Labelling someone as fake without evidence is disrespectful, and it perpetrates harm and division. Instead, I would like to focus on the importance of economic reconciliation and the procurement strategy for indigenous businesses as an important tool for alleviating the injustices faced by indigenous communities over the last centuries.

I would like to remind members of the House that indigenous peoples in Canada make up approximately 5% of the overall population, yet historically, businesses owned by first nations, Inuit and Métis entrepreneurs were consistently winning a lower percentage of federal contracts. This was not due to a lack of capability or innovation, but because of systemic barriers. In fact, during the Harper government, less than 1% of procurement contracts went to indigenous businesses.

That is why, based on engagement with indigenous organizations and business leaders in 2021, Public Services and Procurement Canada, in collaboration with the Treasury Board and ISC, created more opportunities by implementing the mandatory minimum 5% indigenous procurement target. We have heard many times from indigenous partners how important PSIB is for advancing economic reconciliation and supporting indigenous businesses. Since we announced the 5% target, we have seen a surge in indigenous entrepreneurs' interest and investment in the program.

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Investing in indigenous communities and building up indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs benefits all Canadians. According to a 2022 report entitled "National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada", the continued exclusion of indigenous people costs the Canadian economy nearly \$28 billion every year. The National Indigenous Economic Development Board found that closing the existing employment gap could help lift over 150,000 indigenous people out of poverty. There is a real cost to inaction.

On the rare occasions when there are questions about legitimacy of a business or its operations, we have processes in place. Concerns can be referred to the Public Services and Procurement Canada's office of supplier integrity and compliance. This office administers the ineligibility and suspension policy, which ensures any supplier lacking business integrity or honesty can be suspended or debarred. Additionally, we are co-developing a transformative indigenous procurement strategy with indigenous partners to strengthen the integrity and inclusiveness of the program. One key component is transferring the indigenous business directory to indigenous partners, who are best positioned to define and verify indigenous businesses.

We reject the idea that isolated incidents of bad actors should be used to undermine a program delivering tangible benefits. Economic reconciliation is not about contracts. It is about creating opportunities for indigenous communities to thrive and for all Canadians to benefit from their innovation and entrepreneurship.

● (1905)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is clear from that answer that the Liberals have simply not listened to what indigenous leaders have told them. I encourage them to actually listen, instead of repeating talking points, written by people within government, that completely contradict what indigenous leaders are saying.

The AFN has said that a "majority" of those who benefit from these programs are "shell companies". This is not Conservative members saying this. The AFN is saying this. I challenge the parliamentary secretary to simply answer this question: Does he agree with what the AFN has said, yes or no?

He said that identity can be complicated and difficult to trace. The member for Edmonton Centre has admitted he is not indigenous. He has openly acknowledged the company committed indigenous identity fraud by saying it was indigenous-owned. Will the member listen to what is going on, and does he agree with what the AFN has said, yes or no?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, that is not what the AFN has said, but I am eager—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes, it is. Read the testimony.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, as the member is yelling at me out of turn, I am eager to—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan had his one minute to reply, so now he needs to listen to the answer. Whether he likes the answer or not, he should still listen to the answer without disrupting the member who has the floor.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is concerned when his misinformation is called out. He brings up this topic and is eager to establish the integrity of this program. He understands the importance of this program. It is nice that he and his members, for once, are bringing indigenous concerns and economic reconciliation to the forefront. It is important that we ensure the integrity of this program exists, and I look forward to his collaboration in ensuring this program continues.

• (1910)

HOUSING

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am returning to the subject of a question that I first raised in this place on June 14. That was a while ago, so I am going to read what I wrote at the time. I said:

Madam Speaker, I will ask the housing minister something this time.

Carleton Place, in my riding, has been Canada's fastest-growing municipality for the past four years. When the town was given zero dollars from the housing accelerator fund, I wondered why.

Then I investigated.

I went on:

It turns out there is a pattern here. Of the \$1.5 billion awarded to Ontario under the fund, 97% went to cities and towns in which Liberals hold seats.

There are some non-Liberal seats in those cities and towns, but even when this is taken into account, there is a clear pattern. Liberal-held areas received several times more funding per capita than areas held by MPs from other parties.

Why is this so?

I was not the only person who felt concerned about this. A number of my colleagues wrote about it, expressing concern that their communities were being left out of this funding. They said that if other communities were getting funding, they, too, should get funding. However, their communication was misused by the housing minister to give the false impression that there is widespread support for the housing accelerator program, as opposed to alternative ways of ensuring that housing starts are increased. On October 29, the minister stated, "A number of [MPs] are writing me personally, asking that their communities be picked for funding". What he did not say is that he has been unfairly excluding rural communities, communities that are not held by Liberals and so on.

It was a great talking point, a great line, the misuse of these letters, so the Prime Minister got in on the act. On November 6, the Prime Minister said that funding "will provide much needed housing", which is a very selective part of a sentence, to leave the impression that the Conservative MP the Prime Minister was quoting favours this kind of funding.

Fast-forward to November 13 of this year when I got a letter from the housing minister saying, "I am looking for your guidance on whether you would support a \$3,315,593 investment from the Housing Accelerator Fund in the Municipality of Mississippi

Mills." He gives me seven days to respond to it and adds, "I am keen to advance [on this funding] in the absence of any local factors you may believe are relevant in the circumstances.... If you are interested in sharing your views, please be sure to do so before [November 20]."

The point was to pressure me into giving him a letter that would be used to give the impression that I think this is a good program, on the pain, apparently, that if I do not participate and send it in, this funding may not go through to the township of Mississippi Mills. Seven days later, I got another letter from the minister, but about Carleton Place this time. The number of dollars is different and the deadline was pushed back seven days, but it has the identical auto signature. I held both letters up to the light.

It is most inappropriate that the minister is trying to create the false impression that there is support for his terrible program, at the apparent risk of denying MPs funding. Is he not ashamed of what he is doing?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member not to point to documentation he has, as it is considered a prop.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think this falls under the category of "One doth protest too much."

Six months ago, when the member brought forward the question, he was eager for housing accelerator fund money for his community, one of his communities having gotten housing accelerator fund money, the city of Kingston, which he represents. I guess he has had to go into reverse after it was released that Conservative MPs were eager to get the funding. They wanted it because their mayors came to them and said that they need the funding and that the program is a good one.

Like good MPs, they stood up for their communities. I know that the member is a good MP who stands up for his constituents, like he did in June, wondering why one of his communities did not get the funding.

Fast-forward a few months, and the member's leader's office is screaming back down at the members, "How dare you stand up for your communities?" The member had to backpedal and come here and pretend that he did not support the program from the beginning.

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The member has some interesting talking points, including that only cities represented by Liberals get money from the housing accelerator fund. I think his colleagues from Kelowna would disagree, as should he, representing the city of Kingston. There is also London, Hamilton, Calgary and Edmonton, to name a few. These are cities that are represented by Conservative members and that received substantial housing accelerator fund money, along with 179 agreements to cut red tape and fast-track building permits, things that Conservatives pretend to care about.

Once again there is the pattern of Conservatives' talking a good game about how there is a housing crisis; however, when there are actual, concrete steps taken by the government to move forward with a concrete housing plan, the Conservatives are nowhere to be found.

For a brief moment, the hon. member stood up for his constituents and said that they want the money, but his leader's office disagrees. It is disappointing that the member comes, nearly six months after his question, to backtrack, to reverse course, because he is hearing from his leader's office rather than standing up for his constituents.

• (1915)

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, that is one heck of a misrepresentation of what I got up and said six months ago. I said that 97% of the money was going elsewhere in Ontario, a fact which is not disproved by telling me that there is funding that has gone to Kelowna, British Columbia, or to Calgary, Alberta.

I just want to observe that if the minister's letters to me soliciting my feedback are to be taken seriously, then the implication is that the failure to respond might lead to his not giving the money. I will just ask the question: Is it the case that he is actually demanding we give support or else the money will be denied? I would be interested in knowing whether merely raising concerns about the abusive process is going to result in money being taken away from deserving communities. That is an interesting question, is it not?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, let me quote the mayor from one of the communities the member represents. Again, he points outside Ontario. His own community got housing accelerator fund money. He represents the city of Kingston—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member had an opportunity to ask a question. He should now be listening to the answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, the member does not like the hypocrisy. He gets up, and his own community received housing—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

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

Again, the hon. member had an opportunity to ask a question. He may not like the answer he gets, but I would just ask him to please be respectful.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, one of the mayors of the community he represents received housing accelerator fund money, and he said that he is grateful and that it will help “meet the critical need for more housing in our community”, with “our” being the member's riding and the member's community.

The member can point all across the country and all across the province. His own community received housing accelerator fund money. He stood up for it. He still wants it. The question remains: Will he stand up for his constituents or will he just bow to the whims of the office of his leader, who does not want to see any funding or any benefits to his constituents?

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising again to question the government on its lack of investments to ensure every Canadian has access to a family doctor. No Canadian should need to use a credit card to access basic health services in this country.

The House will recall, of course, that the NDP has been instrumental in this Parliament in ensuring we start to broaden health care, including dental care and pharmacare, and pushing for home care and mental health care as well. This has been a fundamental priority of the NDP since Tommy Douglas, the founding leader of the NDP, pushed Parliament 70 years ago to put in place universal health care in Canada. When he forced the government of the day to bring in universal health care, he always envisaged that we would move from there to dental care and pharmacare to ensure that, essentially, we have health care from the top of our heads to the soles of our feet.

This makes sense for a whole variety of reasons. When we have comprehensive health care, there is less of an impact on acute health care. For example, putting in place pharmacare means saving \$4 billion for Canadians. Putting in place dental care, according to emergency room physicians in Ontario alone, saves about \$1 billion a year as Canadians have to show up at the emergency room when they do not have access to dental care.

It is fundamentally important that, if a health care system is going to work, we make the required investments to ensure Canadians have access to a family doctor and are not paying extra fees. The government has been very slow on that. It has been quicker on what the NDP has forced it to do. When it comes to the number of Canadians who do not have a family physician, there has been very little work put into play. This is a criticism not just of the Liberal government but also of the Conservative government, which did absolutely nothing for a decade either.

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The reality is very simple. We need to see more investments to ensure there are more spaces in our universities and medical schools to train doctors and nurses. We need to ensure the funding is there so we get the health care professionals we need. We cannot stop there. We have to recognize foreign-trained credentials as well. There are so many foreign-trained doctors and nurses who come to Canada whose credentials are not recognized because the current and previous governments did not do the work to put in place all of the infrastructure for those credentials to be recognized here.

For those who would criticize and say it would cost a lot of money, I will mention a few of the investments the government has made, and the previous government as well. Between both Conservatives and Liberals, there was \$1 trillion in liquidity supports for Canada's big banks, \$600 billion going to overseas tax havens over the last 15 years and \$100 billion going to oil and gas CEOs over the last 15 years.

The reality is Canada can afford it. We need to make sure health care investments come before the banks, the oil and gas CEOs, and overseas tax savings. Why is the government not putting health care first?

• (1920)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is quite the contrary. The federal government is putting health care first. Canada's universal health care system is a pillar of our national identity. It represents Canadians' ongoing commitment to the values of equity, fairness and solidarity, to ensure that everyone has access to medically necessary health care services based on medical need and not on their ability or willingness to pay. Our government is investing in our public health care system so it delivers for Canadians. It is why we are making investments of close to \$200 billion into the system.

The Canada Health Act does not preclude private facilities from providing medically necessary services as long as the patients are not charged for these services. Our government works with the provinces and territories to ensure the federal government's investments are used in a way that respects the principles of the Canada Health Act. As jurisdictions institute reforms to their health care systems, including using private facilities to deliver insured services, access to medically necessary services should remain equitable and based on medical need.

There is, of course, a legitimate concern that some facilities may attempt to charge patients for access to medically necessary services in contravention of the act. Our government's position remains that when provinces and territories permit private facilities to deliver medically necessary services, those services must be covered by public health care insurance plans. That is why, under the Canada Health Act's diagnostic services policy since March 2023, we have levied a total of \$149 million in deductions to Canada health transfer payments to provinces that have not covered the cost of medically necessary diagnostic services provided in private clinics, leading to patients paying out of pocket for these services. Patients' charges are something our government will never take lightly. Since 2015, we have levied over \$267 million in mandatory health transfer reductions to provinces that have permitted patient charges for medically necessary services delivered at private facili-

ties. I want to assure my colleague that we will continue to take action whenever such charges occur.

The goal of the Canada Health Act administration has never been to levy penalties, but rather ensure patients are not charged for the medically necessary services they have already paid through their taxes. That is why provinces and territories that face mandatory deductions have the opportunity to be reimbursed by Health Canada when they develop an action plan to take the necessary steps to eliminate patient charges. Since the Canada Health Act reimbursement policy came into effect, \$175 million has been reimbursed to the provinces in recognition of their efforts to ensure patients do not face financial barriers when accessing needed care.

Our government will continue to work with provinces and territories to ensure the public health care system continues to be there for Canadians to access medically necessary care. As our system evolves to meet the modern-day needs of Canadians, our government will continue to work alongside the provinces and territories to ensure the foundational values are respected so we can deliver the results Canadians expect and deserve, both now and into the future.

• (1925)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary running a number of different shifts over the course of these adjournment proceedings, but the reality is the government has already chosen to put other things first by giving so much money to the banks, to oil and gas CEOs and, of course, to overseas tax havens. The government has already made that choice. The reality is what we are seeing, and this is shocking, is that particularly in Conservative provinces, I am thinking of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, we have Conservative governments that are simply refusing to put in place an adequate health care system. The outcomes are worse in those three Conservative provinces than elsewhere.

What are the fines that have been levied against the contracting out, the credit card medicine and the poor outcomes in those Conservative-governed provinces?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed my multiple shifts here this evening. I did go through, in my initial speech, the deductions that were levied against the provinces. This is something that will continue. I do share the concern, especially being from Ontario, of the creeping privatization of health care in Ontario and beyond. That is why this government will continue to stand firm, continue to use the penalties available under the Canada Health Act and continue to deduct from transfer payments for provinces that do not have a plan to ensure Canadians are covered properly.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopt-

ed. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:27 p.m.)

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