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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 20, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON HOUSING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH NON-VISIBLE DISABILITIES

The House resumed from October 21, 2022, consideration of the motion.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 59, which was moved in the House by my Liberal colleague from London West.

I commend my colleague for her idea and her compassion because Motion No. 59 addresses an issue that strikes home with me. We are debating the federal framework on housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities.

As members know, the Bloc Québécois is always prepared to support anything that is fair, noble and good for Quebec. As it happens, Motion No. 59 is actually vitally important. It is a non-binding motion that does not infringe on Quebec's jurisdictions under the agreement between Quebec and Ottawa on the national housing strategy, which allows Quebec to set its own housing priorities.

In Quebec, no one registers with the government or the CMHC to obtain federal support. No one turns to Ottawa for housing assistance. It is also important to understand that Quebec implemented the shelter allowance program in 1997 when the federal finance minister at the time made drastic budget cuts.

That strategy, which is now 25 years old, serves Quebeckers and provides them with essential support. The program has been around for 25 years in Quebec, which was able to improve its own programs because it got compensation from the federal government. By withdrawing from the federal program, Quebec was able to provide better support than anywhere else in Canada.

Once again, it is apparent to me that Quebec is a model for the federal government. Indeed, Quebec always wants to take care of its citizens, and that is evident in many other programs. It is in our nature.

I am speaking in today's debate in hopes that my colleague from London West will express this wish to cabinet and that the Minister of Finance of Canada will understand how essential it is to help people with a non-visible disability. I hope that the budget, which will be tabled in a few days, will reflect our desire to help our constituents. Once again, it must be done in accordance with transfer agreements between Ottawa and Quebec.

I would now like to address everyone who is listening in my riding of Laurentides—Labelle. I am certain that all 337 of my colleagues will identify with some of the stories I am about to tell them. They are unique, but, unfortunately, universal.

I will start the tour of my riding in Saint-Rémi-d'Amherst. A few years ago, Alain was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. He regretfully was forced to retire much earlier than planned in the beautiful cottage that he and his wife had just purchased for their golden years, as they are called.

Alain and his wife had to raid the nest egg they had built up for their retirement to undertake a major remodelling of their home so that Alain could spend as much time there as possible despite his illness. As we know, Parkinson's specifically affects mobility. They needed larger doors, wider hallways and a ramp instead of stairs to get from their car to the front door. They also had to add a room to the main floor so he would no longer have to go upstairs. These renovations cost thousands of dollars.

Fortunately for them, they had the means. They were able to do it, but they had to dip into the savings they had earmarked for a comfortable retirement. This couple should have gotten help as soon as they could, not 10 years after the diagnosis.

My father had ALS. He was lucky enough to be able to rely on his family. This illness swiftly impairs a person's motor control. My father had to sell his house and find housing that would accommodate the limitations caused by his illness.

At the time, which was not so long ago, there was no housing that would meet his needs in Mont-Laurier. My father could no longer find a place to live. The house was too big, too difficult to renovate. He had to wait a year before he could move because there was a building being constructed. He was lucky, but we know that not everyone has the means or the time to wait around. That is a double whammy.

*Private Members' Business*

Before I became a member of Parliament, I was the director of the Corporation de développement communautaire des Hautes-Laurentides. Community organizations have been sounding the alarm for years. We know that, we have heard it often enough. The need for housing is pressing for everyone. Imagine for a moment what it is like for people with a non-visible disability. For more than two decades now, the sector has been desperate to be heard, for the government to do something meaningful. Unfortunately, austerity always comes at the expense of the most vulnerable.

Of course the motion comes from a good place. We support it. The government needs to acknowledge and address the real needs on the ground.

Since I have a few minutes left, I want to talk about what is actually happening on the ground. Let us consider the owner of a rental unit. Obviously many people would be lining up to rent the space, because there is a housing shortage. The landlord might be unlikely to rent to someone with a disability, because certain constraints could make the rental unit unsuitable. This leads to a double whammy of prejudice. People with disabilities are twice as vulnerable to prejudice. They are victims of marginalization.

We must take action. In order to support these individuals, we need to help those who are in a position to adapt housing for people with disabilities. We also need to help people who cannot afford what they need and end up having to move, often into rental housing. People with disabilities are more vulnerable and live in more precarious situations, which is why it is important to provide affordable housing adapted to their needs. There is not enough of this kind of housing.

The reality facing those who are vulnerable and too often forgotten is very important to me. According to the Canadian Survey on Disability, it is estimated that 11% of people need ramps, 7% need widened entranceways and hallways, and 6% need lifts like the ones we had at home for my father.

Clearly, this is essential to helping people remain in their homes. However, for these accommodations to occur, people with disabilities and landlords must be provided with substantial assistance to renovate their homes to ensure that this customer base has a housing pool that meets their needs. We would like to see an end to the complacent attitude the government takes towards issues facing people with disabilities, when solutions do exist and should have been presented in a government bill.

• (1110)

[*English*]

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in the House today to participate in the debate on a very important and crucial private member's motion, Motion No. 59, housing for persons with disabilities.

Far too many Canadians have difficulty finding affordable and suitable housing. In my riding of Richmond Hill, organizations such as Blue Door make a difference every day for people facing housing and affordability challenges. Last month, I joined the Coldest Night of the Year fundraising walk in Richmond Hill, where I

truly felt our community's strong warmth and affection in the cost weather outside.

Affordability challenges are particularly difficult for people with disabilities. They struggle to find accessible and affordable supportive housing solutions that meet their individual needs.

Our government recognizes that the housing needs of people with disabilities are especially urgent. We understand that being part of the community and living as independently as possible are among the most important values and goals shared by people with disabilities and their families. Having a safe and affordable place to call home is a cornerstone of independence, not just for them but for everyone in our society.

The national housing strategy was designed to address the needs of vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, visible or invisible. It is the largest and most ambitious federal housing program in Canadian history. This 10-year plan to give more Canadians a place to call home is now backed by more than \$82 billion in investments.

The national housing strategy puts people first and recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities. The strategy considers human rights-based principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination and inclusion.

Its goal is to ensure that more Canadians across the country can access housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. Since launching the national housing strategy, we have helped create, maintain or repair more than 36,000 units of accessible housing across Canada.

This private member's motion seeks to further support the government in upholding a federal framework to improve access to adaptable, affordable housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities, such as mental health, with four objectives: first, prioritizing the creation and repair of accessible housing through NHS programs; second, assuring that vulnerable populations, especially disabled individuals, have access to inclusive, affordable and adequate housing; third, requiring a national housing council specialist on visible and non-visible disability to advise ministers on disability housing policy; and fourth, amending section 4 of the National Housing Strategy Act to recognize disability-related housing impediments.

In the spirit of this private member's motion, the government will continue its work on reducing barriers and increasing access to affordable housing for people with disabilities and a better understanding of how to best support their needs.

One of the ways we are addressing the particular needs of individuals with disabilities, especially invisible disabilities, is by requiring projects funded through the NHS programs to meet minimum accessibility requirements.

For example, a cornerstone program of the strategy, the \$13.7-billion national housing co-investment fund, focuses on developing accessible, socially inclusive housing.

Every project supported through this fund must ensure that at least 20% of housing units meet accessibility standards and that common areas are barrier-free or that the entire project has full universal design. Projects that go above and beyond these minimum requirements are naturally prioritized for funding. I am pleased to say that we are already seeing success.

In Cambridge, Ontario alone, our government is investing nearly \$15 million under the co-investment fund to create 55 new mixed-income homes that will provide support for individuals with mental illness and physical disabilities.

• (1115)

The new residential building that will also support the regional indigenous people will feature affordable units along with visiting support services. Accessibility is central to the design of the building, which will include units with universal design, fully accessible units and common areas with many accessibility features. The project broke ground in the spring of 2021 and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2023.

There are numerous other examples like this from coast to coast, made possible by the national housing strategy. Our government believes in giving everyone a chance to succeed. That is why we are extremely pleased to support this wonderful project and many others.

Another important way in which our government is currently addressing the housing needs for those most vulnerable is through the National Housing Strategy Act. The act, which came into force in 2019, states that “housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities as well as a strong national economy in which the people of Canada can prosper and thrive”.

The act requires that the national housing strategy focus on improving housing outcomes for those in greatest need, which includes persons with disabilities. It sets out that the housing policy of the Government of Canada is, among other things, to “recognize that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law” and to “further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”. The National Housing Strategy Act also created the National Housing Council, an advisory body established to promote participation and inclusion in the development of housing policy.

Ministerial appointees to the council were selected through a public call for applications encouraging a broad cross-section of experts. The council’s members include participants and leaders from the not-for-profit sector, the private sector and academia. The council also includes individuals representing people with lived exper-

### *Private Members' Business*

tise in housing need or homelessness, as well as members of vulnerable populations. Getting advice from the National Housing Council is one of the many ways we understand and consider the diverse needs of vulnerable populations when developing housing policy and as we continue to deliver our national housing strategy.

Individuals with disabilities, visible or non-visible, deserve to live with dignity. They deserve to be full participants in our society. Housing is a major factor in making this possible. Through the projects I have described and many others, we are providing accessible, safe and affordable homes to a great number of individuals with disabilities. In doing so, we are strengthening whole communities across Canada.

I want to close by applauding the member for London West for her leadership and advocacy on this file. Providing safe, adequate and affordable places to live, to call home, for people who need them most is a top priority for this government. We are investing in the development of more inclusive and accessible communities through programs under the national housing strategy to prioritize projects that include accessibility features. This is why I urge everyone in the House to support Motion No. 59 to ensure that every Canadian, regardless of their disabilities, has access to the barrier-free housing they need.

• (1120)

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Parry Sound—Muskoka to talk about the issues that matter to them. Obviously, the affordability of life is a key issue in Parry Sound—Muskoka. Trying to find a home is a big issue. Housing is probably the number one issue in Parry Sound—Muskoka. It is not just the big cities of Toronto and Vancouver where the tent cities are growing; it is in small cities and small rural communities as well. People cannot find homes to live in.

A few weeks ago, I spoke to a business owner in Huntsville who had just hired a new welder. He was excited about this, but that welder quit a few weeks later because he simply could not find a place to live in Huntsville within his budget. It is a story I hear over and over again. People are making the right choices. They get a good education, work hard and pay their bills, yet because of the housing crisis, they struggle to put a roof over their heads in the places they want to be and need to be. Yes, in case there is any question, it is a crisis.

*Private Members' Business*

Motion No. 59 recognizes the need for special consideration for some of the most vulnerable in our society, individuals with non-visible disabilities. It calls on the government to work with stakeholders to improve access. Conservatives support this, and we do so happily, but with some cause for hesitation because we have watched the government's record for eight years, particularly when it comes to housing. The housing situation, after eight years under the government, is now worse than ever. House prices have doubled and rent has doubled. After eight years of the government and the promise of a transformational national housing strategy, the housing situation in Canada has never been worse.

The CEO of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Romy Bowers, had this to say at the Affordable Housing Summit hosted by Scotiabank:

Things are at a crisis point for the middle class, but also particularly for vulnerable Canadians. Inflation is still not under control, the Bank of Canada is increasing interest rates and many economists are forecasting a modest recession for the first half of 2023.

Many households, especially first-time buyers, are taking on debt that is excessive. That's a real concern, especially during an economic downturn because when people are highly leveraged, it creates a lot of instability in the economy, but also pain for households.

I do not know why the Minister of Housing will not acknowledge what his officials seem to acknowledge, that there is a crisis. They even acknowledge that inflation is still out of control and interest rates continue to rise. Of course, this has real-life consequences for Canadians. High interest rates, made worse by Liberal inflationary borrowing, mean that too many Canadians are paying higher mortgages but not paying down any of the debt. Many Canadians going to renew their mortgages this summer or fall may find out they cannot afford their houses anymore.

That is not how it is supposed to work. That is not the sunny ways that Canadians were promised. That is not a transformational housing policy. Canadians were promised that, if they work hard, go to school, get an education and pay their bills, they will get ahead, but that is not what is happening. Too many Canadians cannot afford to get into homes.

Now we have a government that has announced a housing accelerator fund. The Minister of Housing seems to have figured out that it is a supply issue. He said, in fact, "We recognize that the key to increasing housing affordability is to boost the supply of homes available to Canadians." That is great after eight years. For eight years now, the government has been subsidizing demand with \$500 rent subsidy cheques and a savings account that actually, for first-time homebuyers, make things more expensive. All of this borrowing drives historic inflation and historic interest rates, which puts homes further and further away for Canadians.

The accelerator fund is supposed to create 100,000 new units for the cool price tag of \$4 billion. Let us put that into context. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation says that Canada needs 5.8 million new housing units by 2030 to make homes affordable again. If we spread 100,000 units across this entire country, it is a very tiny drop in what I see as an ocean-sized bucket, so forgive me if I find this program just a little insulting. How can we expect the government to get this right when it has had eight years and has not gotten it right yet?

• (1125)

When NIMBY local councillors here in Ottawa blocked 80 new units from being built, the minister did not lift a finger. He does not want to take on the NIMBYs and he does not want to challenge municipalities. He does not want to hold them accountable either. He may think touring the country and announcing a few dozen units here and a few dozen units there is solving the problem, but Canadians know the truth. It is not.

Now we are to trust the new transformational housing plan, but of course the Liberals' first one made things worse, and they are already failing Canadians who have disabilities when it comes to housing.

I will give an example from Parry Sound—Muskoka. Community Living South Muskoka supports over 400 individuals and their families living with developmental disabilities in the south end of Muskoka. It dreamed of building a housing complex to support families, to support these folks, with wraparound supports. It was going to put a roof over their heads and help them live healthy, active and engaged lives in the community.

It had a beautiful piece of property and had the drawings done. It had the municipality on board, and the zoning was done. It had the District of Muskoka's support and even had private support. Then it got to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the endless applications, the delays and the red tape. It gave up. It quit and sold the land. It had a dream of helping Canadians living in south Muskoka with development disabilities, and the bureaucracy crushed it because the organization just could not get through the quagmire of bureaucracy.

Covenant House Vancouver built a beautiful new building. It received \$12 million from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It raised a lot of money privately. It had the support of the local municipality, private donations and even a celebrity endorsement from Ryan Reynolds. Of course, it cost it \$1 million in consulting fees to get \$12 million from the CMHC. Imagine that, for an organization like Covenant House Vancouver, with all those resources, a prime ministerial endorsement and a celebrity endorsement, it still cost it \$1 million. There is no hope for small community organizations like Community Living.

*Private Members' Business*

Health care workers are living in tents. Students are living in homeless shelters. It costs \$2,500 a month to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto. Government delays, permits and red tape add over \$600,000 to every single residential housing unit in the city of Vancouver. We have the lowest number of homes in the G7. Nine out of 10 young people who do not own a home in this country believe they never will.

In 2022, on average, three people suffering from homelessness died every week in the city of Toronto. We have a housing minister who is unwilling to call this what it is, a crisis.

Conservatives understand what is going on. We understand it is a crisis. We do not accept the status quo, because it is a failure. We do not accept the NIMBY city councillors who reject more housing. We do not accept young people being locked out of home ownership.

Conservatives reject the status quo. We embrace a pro-housing agenda, and we will deliver housing for all Canadians by leveraging federal funding to cities and holding them accountable to get the job done. We will incentivize the private sector by removing roadblocks that delay construction. We will push to densify our communities with the infrastructure dollars to support making that happen.

The Conservative plan provides the incentive and the accountability for municipalities to get the job done. We will withhold federal cheques to municipalities that give in to the NIMBYs and we will provide housing bonuses for cities that are committed and dedicated to streamlining approvals and boosting home building.

Conservatives say, “Yes, in my backyard.” Conservatives say yes to building more homes faster. Conservatives say, “We will bring it home.”

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports Motion No. 59 regarding a federal framework on housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities.

This motion does not encroach on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. Under the Canada-Quebec housing agreement, Ottawa gives Quebec the leeway to determine its housing priorities.

This motion highlights the situation faced by many people with non-visible disabilities that affect their quality of life. In particular, it shines a light on access to adapted and affordable housing. I want to point out that the Bloc Québécois recognizes that people living with visible and non-visible disabilities constitute a vulnerable population.

The federal government refused to accept an asymmetrical agreement with Quebec that takes into account the fact that we already have our own social housing programs and, as a result, it took two years to conclude the Canada-Quebec housing agreement. This unacceptable delay, which can only be explained by a reluctance to recognize that Quebec society operates somewhat differently, has caused a backlog that is difficult to clear, given the ballooning construction costs and labour shortages.

Even though no one in Quebec looks to Ottawa for housing support, the fact remains that the years that Quebec has spent waiting for the federal government to transfer national housing strategy funds with no strings attached have had an impact on the availability of housing in Quebec. That has also affected people with visible and non-visible disabilities.

Before we move forward with this motion, it is important to define what is meant by a non-visible disability. A non-visible disability is one that cannot easily be seen, one that might not be noticed if the person does not talk about it. Still, the disorder can have a serious impact on the person's quality of life. The concept of a non-visible disability is complex and applies to many disabilities, including sensory, mental or cognitive disabilities. This term is widely used in all sorts of contexts as an excuse to not see or understand.

The problems involved vary greatly. They are not comparable to each other and the term non-visible disability applies to a wide range of realities. This is not about a non-visible disability; it is about non-visible disabilities. An estimated 80% of reported disabilities are non-visible. For example, a non-visible disability may be impaired vision or hearing, a mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, dyslexia or dyspraxia, or a chronic illness.

Recognition is the major obstacle facing people living with such disabilities. The absence of visible physical manifestations, such as a wheelchair for example, elicits far less sympathy. This non-recognition of their disability by their community may affect their mental health. The lack of understanding or indulgence by the people around them may cause mental anguish in people with a non-visible disability.

It is also important to talk about the purpose of the national housing strategy, which is to ensure the success of the Canadian housing sector by providing affordable housing to more people. The goal is to ensure that everyone has access to affordable housing that meets their needs. To that end, the strategy will prioritize support for the most vulnerable, including people with an invisible disability.

The national housing strategy seeks to pave the way for innovative research, data collection and housing demonstration projects. It seeks to fill knowledge gaps, bring forward the best ideas and shape future housing policy in Canada. It also seeks to provide the federal government with new opportunities for innovation through partnerships with community housing, co-operatives, the private sector and research groups.

Let us come back to Motion No. 59. In the preamble, the government is encouraged to continue working in consultation with various stakeholders who are co-operating with the federal government on housing to uphold a federal framework to improve access to adaptable affordable housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1135)

The Bloc Québécois supports this position because, as I stated earlier, we recognize that people with disabilities are a vulnerable population.

The recommendation made in paragraph (a) makes a lot of sense because these groups face specific challenges to accessing housing as they often require specific accommodations.

Paragraph (b) of the motion implies the possibility of government inaction on this fundamental point. By including the recognition of the additional barriers to housing faced by persons with disabilities, the government would further legitimize the claims of this segment of the population. At the same time, it would facilitate the integration of inclusion measures in housing given that greater inclusion of people with disabilities in housing requires planning for significant investments.

The Bloc Québécois supports paragraph (c) because housing for persons with disabilities requires specific features that are vitally important to the quality of life of the vulnerable populations concerned. Furthermore, this proposal does not infringe on Quebec's jurisdiction.

However, the second part of paragraph (d) is poorly worded. It calls for special attention to be paid to persons with disabilities that have mobility issues or another disability. This paragraph is contradictory because we cannot ensure the equitable treatment of all groups if we focus on one group in particular. Although the second part of this paragraph focuses on persons with a disability, ideally the wording would be revised.

In my riding, people living with disabilities can count on the hard work and generosity of several organizations. I will not have enough time to talk about all of them, but I would like to highlight the great work being done by an organization called Ressource pour personnes handicapées Abitibi-Témiscamingue—Nord-du-Québec.

It is doing a terrific job of maintaining the gains that have been made in terms of support for people with disabilities and ensuring that they fully benefit from the financial resources available to them. It works with people with all types of disabilities, listening closely and offering helpful tools when people with disabilities are looking for a solution to a problem. Organizations like this one are an important part of the network of groups and associations working with people with disabilities.

I would like to talk about my friend Rémy Mailloux, who has been the organization's executive director since 1997. He has drive and confidence as well as cerebral palsy. At the age of 19, he started working as an administrator for the regional cerebral palsy association. He has an irresistible smile and an unwavering commitment to helping people with disabilities. He advocates on their behalf so that they can have a decent future, a better one. They need support from governments.

I would also like to highlight the work of the Club des handicapés de Val-d'Or, which offers educational and social activities that promote skill development, self-esteem and social integration for people living with disabilities.

The Centre d'intégration physique de l'envol is another organization doing great work with people living with disabilities. It is, first and foremost, a living environment that gives people with disabilities a chance to integrate into society, but it is also an open door to the community, preventing them from becoming isolated. This centre gives people with disabilities a place to develop their abilities, their independence, their adaptability, and their communication and social skills, and it helps them feel they are full-fledged members of society.

There is also Vie autonome Abitibi-Témiscamingue, an organization that does extraordinary work by promoting and facilitating the progressive empowerment of people with disabilities in developing and managing personal and community resources.

Lastly, I want to thank everyone at Groupe soleil de Malartic. This non-profit organization helps people with mental health issues reintegrate into society and improve their quality of life, by providing services such as medical transportation, food aid, trust management and a wide range of activities.

• (1140)

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 59 regarding a federal framework on housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities. I would like to thank the member for London West for putting forward this motion, which speaks to a very important issue.

The motion states that the government should work with stakeholders in upholding a federal framework to improve access to adaptable, affordable housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities. In doing so, it calls for consideration of the presence of an expert on persons with visible and non-visible disabilities on the National Housing Council, recognizing in the National Housing Strategy Act the barriers to housing faced by people with disabilities, prioritizing the creation of accessible units, and ensuring that the right to adequate housing is applied equitably.

New Democrats fully support a human rights-based approach to housing. This means that every single person in Canada must have access to safe, affordable and adequate housing as a fundamental and basic human right, yet far too many Canadians, especially those with a disability, are being left behind. An estimated 235,000 Canadians will experience homelessness this year, of whom 45% are living with a physical or mental disability. There is no doubt that the housing crisis disproportionately impacts Canadians living with a disability, many of whom are low-income and living in poverty on fixed incomes. This is not a new issue, but inflationary pressures and the financialization of housing are only making matters worse.



*Private Members' Business*

A 2017 submission from disability rights organizations to the UN special rapporteur on the right to housing outlined the many challenges and additional systemic barriers facing persons with disabilities in realizing their right to housing in Canada. The submission states that people with disabilities “are disproportionately homeless, living in poverty, subject to drastically restricted housing choices, subject to housing discrimination and likely to live in sub-standard housing. This is especially the case for Indigenous persons with disabilities.”

The submission also outlines that people experiencing serious mental illness and substance use disorder, or those with psychosocial disabilities, in addition to those with physical disabilities, face serious housing disparities. There is simply a lack of suitable supportive housing: “Only 19% of people with disabilities living in low-income households report receiving all of the support they need with everyday activities.” People with disabilities also experience discriminatory practices by landlords, including evictions and “failure to accommodate disability-related needs.”

This is unacceptable. Nobody in Canada should be denied the right to housing. However, successive governments have allowed corporate landlords to treat housing like a stock market instead of a basic human right.

According to the National Housing Strategy Act, which was passed in 2019, “the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law”. Under article 19 of the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Canada has an obligation to adopt a human rights-based approach to housing. Despite these legal obligations, Canada is failing to ensure that people living with disabilities have adequate, accessible and affordable housing.

Five years have passed since the creation of the national housing strategy, and the results, so far, are deeply concerning. The recent Auditor General report revealed that the government does not even know whether housing units developed for people with disabilities under the national housing strategy were actually occupied by this population. The government is spending billions of dollars, yet it cannot even tell us if the units it is building are helping people and providing housing for persons with disabilities.

• (1145)

To make matters worse, the government is now excluding many people with disabilities from receiving the one-time \$500 top-up to the Canada housing benefit, something the NDP fought for for people. At the last minute, the government added criteria to say that individuals on programs like disability assistance, where their rent is paid directly to the landlord by the assistance program, are not eligible. This is wrong. Instead of helping people with disabilities to afford rent, the government is punishing them.

To return to the topic of this specific motion, I will be putting forth some amendments to address what I see as some gaps. I am glad to see that the motion calls on the government to prioritize the creation and repair of accessible units through the national housing strategy programs. This is long overdue. New Democrats fully support the creation of accessible units.

In fact, the National Right to Housing Network is calling on the government to ensure all government-funded housing units are fully accessible and universally designed for persons with disabilities. Right now, in B.C. alone, thousands are on wait-lists with BC Housing to find accessible homes.

While it is essential that the national housing strategy recognizes the barriers to housing faced by persons with disabilities, as this motion calls for, it is not enough to just recognize barriers. The government must go beyond symbolic recognition and take real action to address systemic poverty and to adequately address the housing needs of people with disabilities.

These barriers have long been recognized by people living with disabilities and community advocates, those who understand and live this reality. In undertaking the work of ensuring people with disabilities have access to the housing, the government must engage with communities with lived experience. They are the true experts. They have the answers and understand what is needed to finally address this crisis.

To that end, I hope, with the support of the government, that the motion be amended as follows: in paragraph (a), by replacing the words “consider the presence of” with “include”, adding the words “with lived experience” after the words “an expert”, deleting the words “and that the expert”, inserting the word “to” after the words “National Housing Council” and replacing the word “provides” with “provide”; in paragraph (b), by replacing the words “consider amending” with “amend”; and adding paragraph (c), “ensure that the Government of Canada live up to its obligation under Article 19 of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to ensure equal rights and inclusion for persons with disabilities by adopting a human rights-based approach to housing in light of the fact that 45% of homeless Canadians have a disability”.

I hope that the government members would in fact support this amendment. I do not think the approach should be to say that we are asking the government to consider this, rather to say that action needs to be taken—

• (1150)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I must interrupt the hon. member. Once the amendment is proposed, the hon. member must stop.

It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Since the sponsor is not present to give her consent, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

*Private Members' Business*

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me start by recognizing that the member for London West has brought forward to the House a very important issue. Over the last number of years, we have seen the government take a very proactive approach in dealing with housing-related matters. Today, the member for London West, through this motion, has highlighted a critically important aspect to housing and the role that government needs to play: Having and improving access to adaptable, affordable housing is absolutely critical.

The manner in which the motion was brought forward heightens the importance of the issue and allows for additional debate. It is a great way to advocate for a community that really needs to get more recognition. It is quite surprising that we do not already have an expert with some understanding of visible and non-visible disabilities sitting on the National Housing Council. I respect the fact that the member for London West is advocating for that. I think it is long overdue, and I hope it takes place. I am not sure about all the individuals who were engaged and involved with the member in the drafting of the motion she brought forward, but I want to recognize that they have indeed brought forward an issue that is very important, no matter what area of the nation we are talking about.

At the very beginning, the motion talks about the importance of working with others. It is only with this government that, over the last number of years, we have seen the development of a national housing strategy, and we have seen the investment of hundreds of millions going into billions of dollars in non-profit housing. We have been a very proactive government in ensuring that the federal government has a role to play in housing. That is why I was somewhat surprised when the Conservative members stood in this place virtually being critical of the federal government, when the Conservative Party has given no support to non-profit housing. There are many Conservatives who believe the federal government has no role to play in regard to national housing.

We have been working diligently with the different governments, levels of government, indigenous governments and many different stakeholders to ensure that Canada is able to meet the types of housing needs that are going to be there. At least the national government is playing a strong leadership role.

We have seen budgetary measures that have incorporated historic amounts of money going into support for the creation of housing, for renovations to housing and for the greening of the housing industry. The government has worked with municipalities, provinces and indigenous nations to try to get the type of housing developed and renovated that is necessary.

In the province of Manitoba alone, there are tens of thousands of non-profit housing units. Non-profit housing takes into consideration many different things, such as housing co-ops. We have a government, in recent years, that has taken a very keen interest in the promotion and development of housing co-ops, something of which I have been a long-time advocate. Every year, millions of dollars are put toward ongoing operational costs to support the thousands

of homes and low-income people in the province of Manitoba alone.

• (1155)

When we reflect on the resolution that we have before us today, it heightens the importance of people with non-visible physical and mental disabilities. We do need to put more of an emphasis on that. Ottawa does have a role to play, whether it is through the National Housing Council, the debates we have here in the House or the discussions that take place between the Minister of Housing and the provincial counterparts, to advocate and to ensure that we continue to support those initiatives at the community level.

For those who want to be critical of this government, I would suggest they look at previous federal governments in Canada and tell me of one that has invested more in housing and has been there in a very real and tangible way, whether it is legislatively or from a budget perspective. They will find that there has not been a government that has been as progressive and as aggressive on the housing file as this in the last 40 or 50 years.

I will conclude on that thought and applaud the member for London West for bringing forward what I think is a motion that all members should be supporting.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for London West has the floor for her right of reply.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I just want to start by thanking my hon. colleagues who have spoken in support of the motion. We have not only heard from the House, but we have also heard from community members and have spent a year working on the motion. I appreciate the fact that everybody sees its importance.

I have had the honour and privilege of engaging many stakeholders serving members within the disability community. These stakeholders aim to address the different barriers and challenges facing many Canadians who live with disabilities, visible and non-visible, as they try to live their daily lives in Canada. Housing remains one of the most pressing ones.

Young women like Yvonne from London West who live with non-visible disabilities have a higher chance of being discriminated against when trying to access housing. When they do get the housing they are looking for, it does not always meet the accessibility needs they are experiencing.

Kate is a senior living in Toronto in a condo with her husband. She mentioned to me how hard it has been for her and her husband to find an accessible unit that adequately responds to her needs so that she can avoid falls, ambulance calls and hospitalizations.

We simply need to do better by Kate and her husband. In order to do that, we must have a concerted effort from every single level of government, whether municipal, provincial or federal. I hope we can accomplish this through the motion: I hope that, by adopting this motion, we can respond to the needs of Kate and Yvonne.

These are just two stories that I can share here, but the 13% of Canadians who live with visible and non-visible disabilities have many more stories that they can share with the House. Additionally, we have found that individuals living with disabilities experience a lot of poverty. Over 30% of adults with disabilities live in rental housing, and almost 45% of that group now live on low incomes, compared with 25% of Canadians without disabilities.

The national housing strategy is one of the greatest tools that our government has used to create and support the well-being of Canadians by providing affordable housing. Going a step forward to build affordable and accessible housing would not only transform the well-being of Canadians but also keep this country's leadership in serving Canadians.

I think that we all believe, in the House, that everybody deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. As a government, we believe that. We have spent seven years in government working towards that.

Last week, the Prime Minister launched the housing accelerator fund, helping to create 100,000 homes across the country and remove barriers to building more homes. My motion aims to remove the barriers and achieve accessibility for inclusive housing for all those living with non-visible disabilities.

Through the national housing strategy, we will create, maintain and repair more than 36,000 units of accessible housing across the country. I think we can continue to do more, and we will do more.

Safe, affordable and accessible housing is the bedrock of livable cities. We have to do this.

I want to thank the people of London West for allowing me to do this amazing work. I am also thankful to the amazing people who have worked with me on this motion for the past year. I want to start by thanking stakeholders from across the country. Just to name a few, there are Inclusion Canada, the Canadian Association for Community Living, the Accessible Housing Network and Live-WorkPlay, as well as individuals like Kate from Toronto and Yvonne from my riding of London West who have shared their voices with me to make sure that we pass this motion.

I also want to thank my colleagues and other members of government, like the member for Kanata—Carleton.

I am thankful to Erika, Stephane, Molly, Bay, Elie, Jerica, Chris and Kevin for supporting me and making sure that the language of this motion could come to the House. Lastly, I want to thank every single person who has advised me on this motion, seconded the motion and spoken to make sure that the members of their communities who live with non-visible disabilities are represented through the motion.

All Canadians deserve a safe and affordable place to call home, including those with visible and non-visible disabilities.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):**  
The question is on the motion.

### *Business of Supply*

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

The hon. member for London West.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 22, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1210)

[*English*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC)** moved:

That, given the many reports of foreign interference in Canada's democratic processes by, or on behalf of, the communist regime in Beijing, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics be empowered and instructed to study all aspects of foreign interference in relation to the 2019 and 2021 general elections, including preparations for those elections, and, to assist the committee with this study,

(a) Katie Telford, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, be ordered to appear before the committee as a witness, for three hours on her own, under oath or solemn affirmation, at a date and time, no later than Friday, April 14, 2023, to be fixed by the Chair of the Committee;

(b) the following individuals be invited to appear as witnesses before the committee on dates and times to be fixed by the Chair of the Committee, but no later than Friday, May 19, 2023,

(i) the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, to appear on her own for two hours,

(ii) the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, to appear on his own for two hours,

(iii) the Minister of Public Safety, to appear on his own for two hours,

(iv) Morris Rosenberg, author of the assessment of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol for the 2021 general election, to appear on his own for two hours,

(v) Janice Charette, Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, to appear on her own for two hours,

(vi) a panel consisting of the 2019 and 2021 national campaign directors for each recognized party in the House,

(vii) a panel consisting of the security-cleared party representatives to the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections during the 2019 and 2021 general elections,

(viii) a panel consisting of the Hon. Ian Shugart, Greta Bossenmaier, Nathalie Drouin, Gina Wilson and Marta Morgan, members of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol Panel during the 2019 general election,

(ix) James Judd, author of the assessment of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol for the 2019 general election, to appear on his own,

(x) a panel consisting of David Morrison, François Daigle, Rob Stewart and Marta Morgan, members of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol Panel during the 2021 general election,

(xi) David Vigneault, Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, to appear on his own for two hours,

*Business of Supply*

(xii) John McCall MacBain former Chair of the Board of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation,

(xiii) Élise Comtois, former Executive Director of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation,

(xiv) the Hon. John McCallum, former Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, to appear on his own for one hour,

(xv) Jennifer May, Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, to appear on her own for one hour;

(c) for the purposes of this study, it be an instruction to the committee that,

(i) it hold at least one additional meeting, for a duration of three hours, during each House sitting week concerning this study,

(ii) it hold at least one meeting during the adjournment period beginning Friday, March 31, 2023, if necessary, for the purposes of paragraph (a),

(iii) any proceedings before the committee in relation to any motion concerning non-compliance with paragraph (a) of this order shall, if not previously disposed of, be interrupted upon the earlier of the completion of four hours of consideration or one sitting week after the motion was first moved and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment;

(d) for the purposes of this study, the committee shall, notwithstanding paragraph (p) of the special order adopted on Thursday, June 23, 2022, have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; and

(e) the evidence and documentation adduced by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs during the current session in relation to its study of foreign election interference shall be deemed to have been laid upon the table and referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would like to inform the House that the remaining Conservative caucus speaking slots will be divided into two parts.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to our Conservative motion that, among other things, calls on the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, to testify about Beijing's election interference in 2019 and 2021. After all, Katie Telford, as the Prime Minister's chief of staff, is a critical witness for getting to the heart of this scandal. What does the Prime Minister know, when did he learn about it and what did he do or fail to do about Beijing's election interference?

While this motion is a test for the government, it is also a test for the NDP, because on three occasions at the procedure and House affairs committee, the NDP blocked Katie Telford from appearing before the committee. NDP members have a choice. They can continue to do the bidding of this corrupt Liberal government, propping up this corrupt Prime Minister, or they can work with us to protect the sanctity of the ballot box and the integrity of our elections by working to get the answers that Canadians deserve about Beijing's election interference in not one but two federal elections. We will soon find out what choice they make.

The key question that must be asked is this: What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

Since November, when reports of Beijing's interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections came to light, the Prime Minister has refused to come clean about what he knows. For two weeks, the Prime Minister was silent. Then the Prime Minister broke his silence in an effort to sow confusion and avoid accountability. The Prime Minister used carefully chosen words to say that he was not briefed about candidates receiving money from China. How convenient that is, because no one was ever saying that candidates re-

ceived money from China. It is not as if Beijing writes cheques and hands them out to candidates. It is an absurdity.

What is at issue is a campaign of interference by Beijing in two federal elections, and on that issue, the Prime Minister has refused to answer the most basic of questions. He has refused to say how many times he was briefed. He has even refused to acknowledge that he had been briefed, even though it is now well established that the Prime Minister has been frequently briefed about Beijing's election interference. Indeed, the Prime Minister's own national security adviser, when she testified at the procedure and House affairs committee, acknowledged that the Prime Minister had been briefed frequently.

In a desperate attempt to change the channel, the Prime Minister has engaged in pathetic attacks, even going so far as to outrageously claim that those who want to get to the bottom of Beijing's interference, those who dare to hold the Prime Minister to account for Beijing's attack on our democracy, are undermining democracy. It is Beijing interfering in two federal elections that is undermining democracy, and it is a Prime Minister who has turned a blind eye to interference who is undermining democracy.

The Prime Minister has shut down calls for an independent public inquiry. He has ordered Liberal MPs at the procedure and House affairs committee to use every trick in the book to impede the work of the committee to get to the bottom of Beijing's interference. That includes blocking the production of relevant documents and shielding key PMO officials and former and current ministers. This is now culminating in a shameful filibuster that has gone on for four days and nearly 24 hours to shield the Prime Minister's chief of staff from having to come to committee.

● (1215)

Taken together, the actions of the Prime Minister are not the actions of a transparent prime minister. They are not the actions of a prime minister who is concerned about Beijing's election interference. They are the actions of a prime minister who has something to hide. They are the actions of a prime minister who has engaged in a cover-up.

Beijing's interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections is not speculative; it is well documented. Even in the limited disclosure given to the procedure and House affairs committee, that interference is evident. For example, a February 21, 2020, daily intelligence brief prepared by the PCO observed that Beijing orchestrated "subtle but effective interference networks" in the 2019 election. It said, "subtle but effective interference networks", and the Prime Minister received that PCO briefing according to his national security adviser.

*Business of Supply*

During the 2021 election, a September 13, 2021, open data analysis of the rapid response mechanism of Global Affairs Canada observed an online disinformation campaign on the online social media sites of those affiliated with the Beijing regime. It targeted the Conservative Party generally and targeted individual Conservative candidates, including the now defeated Conservative member of Parliament Kenny Chiu. That open data analysis further observed that this disinformation campaign had “grown in considerable scale”.

Then there are the reports from *The Globe and Mail* and *Global News* based upon their review of CSIS documents and other security and intelligence documents that reveal a campaign of interference by Beijing. It begs the question: In the face of that interference, what did the Prime Minister do about it? It appears that he did nothing. After all, no arrests have been made, no diplomats have been expelled and the Prime Minister kept Canadians in the dark. Canadians would still be kept in the dark but for whistle-blowers and the work of *Global News* and *The Globe and Mail*.

CSIS advised the Prime Minister that, in response to foreign interference, the policy of the government should be one of transparency and sunlight and that such interference should be made known to the public. However, the Prime Minister has done the opposite of this. He kept Canadians in the dark, and now he is trying to bury the truth with a smokescreen, including a so-called special rapporteur, whom he appoints and who reports to him. He turns out to be a family friend and is a member of the Beijing-funded Trudeau Foundation, someone who is hardly independent. It is a secret committee with secret evidence and secret conclusions redacted by the PMO. It is hardly transparency and sunlight.

We put forward this motion because Canadians deserve transparency and sunlight. It is time to end Liberal obstruction. It is time to end the Liberal cover-up. It is time to get answers, and that starts with hearing from the Prime Minister's chief of staff. If the Prime Minister really has nothing to hide, he would support transparency and sunlight. He would support this motion.

● (1220)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have asked the member this question at the procedure and House affairs committee. I have encouraged him to address it on a number of occasions and he has not, so I will put the question very clearly to him today. The member for Red Deer—Lacombe referred to a sitting member of this House as an agent of Beijing. Does the member think that any MP who currently sits in this House is an agent of Beijing?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I would encourage this House to vote for this motion to end the Liberal cover-up.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this is my first time standing in the House this week, and I want to take a moment to acknowledge the two fallen police officers who lost their lives last week in Edmonton: Constable Ryan and Constable Jordan. I want to acknowledge the service they gave and the ultimate price they paid, as well as give my deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones of both of these constables.

I would like to ask the member a quick question. At PROC, there was a motion brought forward by the NDP to expand the scope of the study to ensure we were looking at not just Chinese interference but interference by Iran, Russia and other countries that we know have influenced or have tried to influence previous elections. The member voted against it.

I wonder if he would now say it is important for us to look at not just the 2021 and 2019 elections, but all of our election processes and the attempts by other countries to influence our electoral processes.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, first, I associate myself with the comments by the member for Edmonton Strathcona regarding the horrific killing of two great Edmonton police constables, constables Jordan and Ryan. My thoughts and prayers are with their families and the entire Edmonton Police Service. It illustrates how the men and women in law enforcement put their lives on the line every single day. Constables Ryan and Jordan did just that, and they will always be remembered for their service to protect our community in Edmonton.

I acknowledge that foreign interference from Russia, Iran and other countries, other bad actors, is a real problem. However, we have very specific reports of very specific interference in two very specific federal elections, and we need to get to the bottom of these issues. The way to do that is to have a focused study at a parliamentary committee that can call witnesses to get the answers Canadians deserve. That includes a full and independent public inquiry, not the smokescreen the Prime Minister has offered to cover up the truth.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He may have said things differently than I would have, but the main ideas are there. The reasons are there and they are valid.

There is one thing that I wish my colleague had talked about. I heard him criticize the NDP and the Liberal government a lot for their complicity in the fact that there still has not been a public inquiry on Chinese interference, which is a major problem. I would like to know what reasons the government and the NDP could have for refusing to open such an inquiry when the public is calling for one.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, it is very disappointing that the NDP has stood in the way of getting answers. This is an NDP opposition party that might as well be called the NDP government, as it is joined at the hip with the Liberal government. The New Democrats have propped up the Prime Minister every step of the way, so this motion puts them to the test. They will have to stand up, one by one, and vote to either prop up this corrupt Prime Minister or get to the bottom of Beijing's election interference. The choice is theirs. Only one choice is the right one: to vote for the motion.

*Business of Supply*

• (1225)

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to follow my esteemed colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton, who has really been leading the charge along with several colleagues trying to shine a light on what the Liberals are trying to hide. One thing we know by now is that it must be really bad because the Prime Minister has gone to such great lengths to keep the truth from coming out.

One does not go to such great lengths if it is just some kind of a minor technicality or if it is a small point of difference between two political parties. They send in their members of Parliament to embarrass themselves at committee and carry on a filibuster, insulting the intelligence of Canadians and other parliamentarians and denigrating the institution of Parliament, which is meant for the one fundamental purpose of holding the government to account. When they do that and the government throws up all kinds of contrived barriers to that investigation, it tells us something, and that is that the Prime Minister must be hiding something really big.

We need to know who knew what and when about allegations of the Communist regime in Beijing interfering in Canadian elections. Canada is a wonderful country with a proud heritage and history, and Canadians are well served by strong democratic institutions that, over the course of years, we have refined and improved. Because it is run by individual human beings, it will never be perfect, but Canadians can have great confidence in those institutions if the politicians who hold those public offices treat those positions with respect because there is nothing magical in the air, the water or the trees of our wonderful country that will keep those institutions strong if politicians who undermine them get away with it. That is why every generation of Canadians, both voters and elected officials, have to treat those positions with respect and hold individuals accountable when they do not.

We did not come to the House today to debate this motion based on rumours, and we did not come here to debate this motion based on what we overheard in committee proceedings. We are basing this motion on the fact that high-level national security officials have taken the unprecedented step of blowing the whistle on the government. For someone who works at CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, to go to journalists with sensitive information puts themselves, their family and their career in grave jeopardy.

There are serious consequences in law, and well there should be, for people who divulge sensitive information, but as we learned over the weekend from the official who took the extraordinary measure of explaining his actions to the *Globe and Mail*, this individual was so compelled to blow the whistle because of the inaction of the government.

For multiple years, our intelligence security officials, who often put themselves in real imminent danger when they carry out their duties, have been warning the Prime Minister. We have multiple reports. I am reading here from a *Global News* story of March 8 highlighting a special report prepared by the Privy Council Office for the Prime Minister's government that was date-stamped January 2022, well after the 2021 and the 2019 elections. The memo was also finalized, suggesting it was intended to be read by the Prime Minister and his senior aides.

*Global News* also learned of an earlier high-level warning about clandestine funding of China's "preferred candidates" that came from a bipartisan panel of parliamentarians two months before the 2019 election. The information came from Canada's National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which reviews national security matters and promotes government-wide accountability.

Who does that committee report to? Who reads those reports? That committee reports to one person: the Prime Minister. It is inconceivable that the Prime Minister did not receive that report, yet on multiple occasions the Prime Minister has stood in this place and claimed he had no knowledge about funding coming from the Communist regime in Beijing flowing to candidates here in Canada, despite at least two reports that highlighted exactly that, which went to him personally.

• (1230)

That is why we need this motion. That is why we need to break the logjam the Liberals have imposed upon members of Parliament at committee by filibustering, delaying and pulling out every trick in the book, including reading the phone book into the record, just to prevent important key officials from testifying.

Some people might ask what would be the cause of this. We know that the Prime Minister admires the Communist dictatorship in China. He was asked once, other than Canada, which country he admires the most. He did not say he admired China because of its natural beauty. He did not talk about the history of China. He talked about admiring the basic dictatorship of China. Those were his words.

Let us look at the policies of the Prime Minister upon coming to office. The Chinese government has invested heavily in something called the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This is a development bank that pays for large-scale infrastructure projects throughout Asia. Many security experts and foreign affairs experts call this Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank the development arm of the foreign affairs policy of the Communist Party in Beijing. The Prime Minister decided to take \$250 million of Canadian taxpayers' money and give it to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to help promote the national interests of the Communist Party in Beijing.

We know the Prime Minister took years to make a decision on Huawei. When all our major trading partners and security partners were banning Huawei from the next generation of telecommunications, the Prime Minister dragged his feet.

The Liberals have not kicked out a single diplomat. We have heard about illegal police stations operating on behalf of the government of Beijing, and reports of intimidation and harassment of people from China, the coercion and pressure upon them to vote the right way to support a certain nomination candidate. These are serious reports that do not come from other political parties, they come from our national security experts.

The Prime Minister has known about this for months. The Liberals have not closed down a single one, and they have not expelled a single official of the Communist regime.

What did the Prime Minister do last week in the face of mounting pressure, backlash, and more and more Canadians asking the tough questions about what the Prime Minister knew and why he has done nothing about it? He appointed a special rapporteur. I can just imagine the marketing department of the Liberal Party. Maybe the Liberals whiteboarded “interlocutor”, and then thought that nobody would go for that. Maybe they thought about calling that person an “inspector general”.

They landed on rapporteur, and they picked a close family friend of the Prime Minister himself. The Prime Minister who has proven to be allergic to preventing conflicts of interest has appointed a family friend, someone who brags about their growing up together, as families, in the ski chalets of the Laurentian Hills. Could there be anything more emblematic of the Laurentian elite here in Canada than the Prime Minister appointing a family friend from his background in the Laurentian Mountains, at his ski chalet, to investigate whether or not there should be a public inquiry into his handling of the foreign interference? It is unbelievable.

Not only is he a close family friend, but he is also someone who sits on the board of the Trudeau foundation, the very foundation that accepted money that flowed from the Communist regime in Beijing and has only paid it back seven years later.

Today is about something else. This motion would shine a light. It would ensure that the ethics committee could shine a light on what the Prime Minister knew. This is a very important decision for the New Democrats. The NDP used to believe in things. I come from Saskatchewan. Many people consider Saskatchewan to be the birthplace of the NDP. We can look back at the history of leaders of the NDP, whether it was Jack Layton, who I served with, Ed Broadbent, or someone before that. We may have disagreed on principles, but we at least recognized that the NDP had principles. We would disagree over policy, but we could respect that they believed in something.

One of the things the NDP used to believe in was openness and transparency. For some reason, over the past few weeks, the New Democrats have decided to put their own partisan interests ahead of the national interests.

I challenge the NDP members today, if they are serious, and if they want to look Canadians in the eye to say that they believe in ethics, openness and transparency, then they must vote for this motion. If they do not, they will be signalling that they are okay with Liberal corruption.

• (1235)

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague across the way talk about the importance of trust in institutions and respect for institutions. Then I saw on his own social media, and indeed he raised it again today, questions about the integrity of someone who was a governor general in this country, who was appointed by former prime minister Stephen Harper when that member sat exactly where the Speaker of the House is right now.

### *Business of Supply*

I can certainly consider that the Conservative Party may not agree with the approach the government has taken and might like to see different elements, but to be able to denigrate the integrity of the gentleman who was appointed by a Conservative prime minister and has been involved in public life in a really important way is completely unfortunate and is emblematic of where the Conservative Party is right now.

I will give this member the opportunity on the floor of the House of Commons to say he does not believe in the approach the government has taken but that he will walk back his comments on how he has denigrated the integrity of a gentleman who is widely respected in this country.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Madam Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who has done such a disservice to the former governor general. That is who should be apologizing to Canadians for dragging David Johnston into this. The fact of the matter is that David Johnston sits on the board of the Trudeau foundation. This is the very foundation that is at the hub of allegations of money flowing from the Communist regime into Canada. Do not take my word for it. The foundation itself admitted that when it repaid part of the money it received.

David Johnston himself talks about being a close family friend of the Prime Minister. Just because he may have been qualified to serve in one role years ago, as governor general, which is a non-partisan role and one that rises above the back-and-forth, does not mean he is suitable for this role. It is that point the Conservatives are highlighting when we talk about the conflict of interest.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, I would like to extend my condolences to the people of Amqui and to the family of the police officers who were killed in Edmonton.

You talked about the integrity of elections. We know that there was a foreign interference campaign. The Prime Minister did nothing. He completely ignored the warnings from CSIS.

What do you think about the government's inaction, and what would you do if you were in government?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would say to the hon. member that I would do nothing at all and remind her to address her comments through the Chair and not directly to her colleague.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. It is the question that all Canadians are asking themselves at this time.

What is going on? Why is the Prime Minister so afraid to launch a public inquiry? When there is nothing to hide, it is very easy to provide documents to be reviewed because there is nothing to fear. Given that the Prime Minister is going to such great lengths to block the committee's investigation, we can only come to one conclusion: He has something very serious to hide.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, New Democrats have been clear from the beginning of this issue that nothing less than a thorough public, transparent and independent inquiry would suffice to give Canadians confidence in our democracy and make sure future elections are free of foreign interference. In fact, we were the first party in the House to call for that.

I happen to sit on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, and although, of course, there is much I cannot say, what I can do is point all members of the House to a report that was issued on foreign interference several years ago. It is clear in that report, to anybody who wants to read it, including my hon. colleague, that there are numerous countries alleged to be involved in foreign interference in this country.

Will the motion tabled, which he is supporting today in the House, be broad enough, in his view, to encompass foreign interference by any country in Canadian democratic processes, or does he intend his motion to be restricted only to the government of China?

• (1240)

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague can read the motion, look at the terms within it and decide for himself whether he thinks it is worthy of support. I hope he does support it.

It is easy to call for things. We can walk outside in the foyer and we can call for whatever we like, but tomorrow there will be a vote, and that member and his caucus will have to show action. The difference between being the fourth party and being the opposition party, and the future governing party, is that we have to back up our words with action.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the opposition for this opportunity to speak to this motion. Protecting Canadians means protecting the country's institutions. It is an important responsibility for all governments, but some are trying to exploit the freedoms we enjoy as Canadians to sow division and compromise our democratic values.

*[English]*

It is for that reason that this motion is so important. I assure all members in the chamber that this government takes foreign interference with the utmost seriousness. The threats that it poses to our economy, to our academic and research institutions, to our critical infrastructure and, indeed, to our democratic institutions, including most especially our elections, is of paramount importance and work in which I hope all members will be united.

Although I have identified these priorities, they are indeed the pillars of our democracy. The people who work within these institutions, Canadians who contribute, is sacred.

I understand that there has been a substantial amount of heat and passion in this subject matter. At times I think it has been regrettable to see that the discourse has strayed far too much into partisanship. I do not believe any of us benefit from that. It is my sincere hope that we would be able to have a debate on this motion, on the merits, on the principles, on civility and respect, because only

together united can we fight against foreign interference and protect our institutions and our democracy.

There are two primacies to this motion. One is that we need more transparency. I am going to speak to that and about the ways in which this government is raising the bar and shining a light on the way in which we protect our national security. The second is the questions around what this government is doing to fight against foreign interference.

Let me start with the latter. Since taking the reins of government, we have been very proactive in putting in place the people, the resources, the technology, the powers and the authorities to equip all of the agencies that work within our national security and public safety apparatuses to protect our institutions.

By way of example, that includes legislation like Bill C-59, which gave CSIS new threat reduction measure powers to address and mitigate; in other words, reduce threats that may be caused by foreign interference or other hostile activities that could be used to undermine our democratic institutions. We put that legislation into place.

This government also introduced Bill C-76 to crackdown on foreign funding that could be used to interfere with our elections. It has become a useful tool to deter and disrupt those efforts as a way of safeguarding our democratic institutions.

Very recently, I launched a public consultation that will see the creation of a foreign-influenced transparency registry, so we can promote legitimate diplomacy and foreign activities on Canadian soil, while at the same time deterring and stopping any efforts that go beyond legitimate diplomatic activities here at home.

Even as we have done that, this government has raised the bar on transparency. We have done that through the creation of a number of new committees and agencies.

• (1245)

*[Translation]*

The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians is there to study matters related to security and intelligence. This new committee was created by our government to increase collaboration between all recognized parties in the House of Commons and with the Senate.

Under the leadership of one of my colleagues on the government side, many recommendations were made in a unified, cohesive manner to fight foreign interference. The government is in the process of implementing some of those recommendations.



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What is more, we created the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA. The purpose of this agency is to review all the work that is done by our national security agencies. It has access to top secret information so that it can review our agencies' national security and public safety activities, in order to assure everyone that the work is being done properly or, if not, to provide meaningful recommendations that will benefit everyone.

[English]

By creating these bodies, we have raised the bar of transparency. We are benefiting from their work. We are doing so in a way that is bipartisan. In other words, we are finding ways to collaborate across the aisle in this chamber.

In addition to that, vis-à-vis our democratic institutions and specifically our elections, our government created the critical election incident public protocol, as well as the CEIPP panel, which is made up of our top, non-partisan, independent, professional public servants. They are there to ensure that during the course of an election that all the checks, balances and protections are doing their job to preserve the integrity of our federal elections. That is precisely what not one but two independent panels confirmed after they examined the circumstances of the federal elections in 2019 and 2021.

In short, they certified that those elections were free and fair, *libres et justes*, and my hope is that Canadians will take assurances in those conclusions, not to give rise to some sense of complacency but rather so we can be sure we are on the right track when it comes to putting in place the mechanisms necessary to shield our democratic institutions from foreign interference.

We need to do more. That is why, in addition to all of those mechanisms, just last week we announced the appointment of David Johnston, a former governor general appointed by Stephen Harper, a Conservative prime minister, and an individual with unimpeachable qualities and characteristics, to fulfill the role and to give us concrete advice on what the next best practical steps ought to be, given some of the questions around the 2019 and 2021 elections.

This builds on the two reports that were filed by James Judd and Morris Rosenberg, two former public servants with distinguished records, in a non-partisan, independent way, contributing to the dialogue in this important area with tangible, concrete recommendations on which the government has committed to act.

Indeed, in the case of Mr. Judd, we have acted on all but one of the recommendations. With regard to Mr. Rosenberg's report, we have heard my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who has committed to implementing those recommendations as well.

• (1250)

In the event that there are any questions about Mr. Johnston's qualifications, which I again believe are unimpeachable, let me quote from a number of Conservatives who have said the following.

I believe it was Fred Delorey, the former national chair of the Conservative Party campaign in 2021, who said that there was no-

body better qualified. I believe it was Stephen Harper who said that David Johnston was the best of Canadians.

We can place trust and confidence that he will, without any pride or prejudice toward political parties or partisanship, put forward the best possible recommendations when it comes to the important subject matter of fighting against foreign interference.

I will say a few concluding words about the work that is being done by PROC, another forum in which the government is putting forward witnesses to again shed light on the way in which we are doing the work around foreign interference and national security.

Most recently PROC heard from the Prime Minister's national security intelligence advisor, the deputy ministers from Global Affairs and the former deputy minister from Public Safety, as well as from my colleagues, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. All of them were able to certify that the federal elections in 2019 and 2021 were free and fair, but acknowledged that foreign interference was a significant challenge that required a proactive posture, one that continues to study, very thoughtfully and carefully, the types of tools and mechanisms we need to put in place to combat against those hostile actors who would try to undermine our democracy.

Our government will continue to co-operate with that committee. It is important that we demonstrate a willingness to work with all parliamentarians so we can offer evidence and advice and put our collective minds together to navigate this challenge.

Beyond Parliament, it is important that we engage Canadians.

I want to take a moment to underline that in the conversations I have had with a number of communities around how we create new tools, including the foreign agent registry, expressions of concern have been articulated to me, concerns that we do this work in the right way, that we do it transparently, and that the ways that we draft and craft our laws are done consistent with the principles that are espoused in the law and in the charter. That has to be the bedrock of the way in which we put pen to paper when we draft our legislation. It is technical work. It is complex work.

It is challenging to define and get the parameters right for how these authorities are triggered, used and then accountable in the use of those authorities, to be sure they are exercised reasonably and then accountable thereafter in the public reporting of it all.

With respect to Bill C-59, that is precisely why, when we created the new threat reduction powers for CSIS, we did so concurrently with the creation of NSIRA, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, so we could be accountable and transparent, so if any questions were raised legitimately about how these powers were being used, we could make the necessary course corrections to maintain trust and confidence in all Canadians when it came to the way in which we did the work around national security.

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The Conservatives have gone to some length at times to be political and to be partisan, and that is regrettable. I do not believe that any of us profit from trying to score political points. We are a democracy. This is a chamber that sees some vigorous debate every single day, and it is a privilege to be part of those debates. Through those debates, my hope is that we are able to refine our ideas and advance them for the national interest.

• (1255)

However, when it comes to foreign interference, whether from the People's Republic of China, Russia or any other hostile actor that would attempt to undermine our institutions, it is important we take a team Canada approach.

We all have a vested interest in protecting the rules, principles and values that underpin our democracy. My sincere hope is that we will be able to continue to do this work in a way where, yes, there is fierce debate but it does not stray into partisanship and into the unnecessary politicization of an issue that should transcend it, so that we can do whatever is necessary to protect our democracy from all the threats that lie on the horizon.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will ask the minister a very simple, non-partisan question, and I would refer him to the NSICOP annual 2019 report which, in chapter 2, has over 50 pages on foreign interference. Specifically, it has six key findings and three key recommendations, all unredacted and available to the public. This is a report that went straight to the Prime Minister.

I have a two-part question.

First, why has this government not taken any action on those three recommendations put forth by the non-partisan NSICOP committee?

Second, the last recommendation in particular refers to the very first report NSICOP produced around the Prime Minister's trip to India and the allegations tied to that, which reads, "In the interest of national security, members of the House of Commons and the Senate should be briefed upon being sworn-in and regularly thereafter on the risks of foreign interference and extremism in Canada." I think it would be unfair to ask the minister how many times since the start of the government, but since he has become the Minister of Public Safety, has he personally ensured that opposition members have been briefed, upon being sworn in at the appropriate level, on foreign interference in Canada?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, it is my commitment to work with my hon. colleague and all members in the chamber to ensure they are briefed in the appropriate forums, including when it comes to the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. Again, it is a committee that the government created not only to raise the bar of transparency but also to promote and foster greater collaboration across partisan lines.

My colleague cites recommendations, but he then posits that no action has been taken. I would respectfully disagree. In fact, we are acting on a number of recommendations that have been put forward by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, including, most recently, and I would highlight for his ben-

efit, the creation of a national coordinator who will be situated within my ministry to combat foreign interference.

Is there more work to be done on those recommendations? Without question there is, but again, it is my commitment to him and to all members of the chamber to work without any prejudice towards partisanship to do this work together when it comes to fighting foreign interference.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the minister's speech and found it very strange. Just think about the Chinese interference issue. Back when the first reports came out and questions started to be asked, the government simply said that there was no issue. It claimed that asking questions meant we were anti-Chinese, that we were, in essence, racist. That was the government's response.

Now, with everything that has come out in the media, the government has been backed into a corner, so it has decided to appoint a special rapporteur. It thinks that that will be enough, that everyone will be happy and move on. The whole thing is a farce.

We keep asking questions, and the minister claims that we are making partisan attacks. However, the people are also demanding a public inquiry into Chinese interference.

Is the entire population partisan too? I am trying to understand the logic behind the minister's speech.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The government takes the issue of foreign interference very seriously. All of our legislation demonstrates our commitment to this issue. Consider for example Bill C-59, which granted the Canadian Security Intelligence Service new powers to reduce threats caused by foreign interference. Another example is Bill C-76, which targeted foreign funds that could pose a threat to our democratic institutions.

My colleague is quite right to ask questions. That is the purpose of this House. The point of this place is to shed light on how we carry out these duties. At the same time, it is fair to point out that, for the government and for everyone else, partisanship is not good for debate.

I hope we can set partisanship aside as we move forward.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, Canadians find these allegations of foreign interference in our elections extremely troubling, and seven in 10 Canadians want to see a public inquiry. In fact, the Prime Minister's own former principal secretary believes a public inquiry into this matter is needed. We have an established process in Canada for getting to the bottom of questions like this, and I think most people are quite confused that the Liberals have, instead, chosen such a convoluted path to get to uncovering the truth.

Could the minister shed some light on why the Liberals continue to drag their feet instead of getting the transparency that Canadians deserve on our elections and the potential for foreign interference?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I would say respectfully to my colleague that we have been very proactive when it comes to both the way in which we are fighting foreign interference and being upfront with Canadians as to the various manners in which we do that work. Without wasting any time, we have created new powers but we also introduced the committee of parliamentarians.

My colleague makes reference to some confusion around the next steps. We said, less than two weeks ago, that we had an intention of appointing a special rapporteur, an eminent Canadian who possesses the credibility and the qualifications to map out the next steps to better shield our democratic institutions, including elections, from the allegations of foreign interference. They are fair questions.

We have now appointed that individual, and I am encouraged that the New Democrats have not gone down the path of the Conservatives and have not been partisan with regard to Mr. Johnston but, rather, see that he is qualified to do this important work. Now we will do whatever we can to support him in his wide mandate so we can shine a light on additional steps, if any, including and up to a public inquiry, so there can be confidence in our institutions, most particularly our elections.

**Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to express my heartache at the horrific stabbing that happened this morning in my riding, at Charles P. Allen High School. At the moment, there are three victims in the hospital and a student in custody. My prayers and heartfelt thoughts are with the victims. Special prayers go to them, as well as to the brave Halifax Regional Police officers who responded.

Could the minister please explain to the House and to Canadians the role of the special rapporteur?

• (1305)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I extend my condolences to the member's community.

The role of the special rapporteur will be to provide advice on what, if any, additional steps need to be taken, given allegations of foreign interference that have been raised with regard to the 2019 and 2021 elections, but with sufficient flexibility to offer additional recommendations and suggestions on how we can better fight against foreign interference. As I said in my last response, that could include a recommendation for an independent public inquiry. It is not the only way in which that work can be done, but it is certainly an option that has been deliberately and consciously left on the table by the government.

I would point out, importantly, that the government will respect whatever recommendation Mr. Johnston puts forward.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I find it very fascinating to sit here and listen to the minister talk about how great he now believes former prime minister Stephen Harper is. It is really quite fascinating that he has such great and sage wisdom to be able to appoint this wonderful person,

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the former governor general. I would suggest that a former governor general really does not necessarily make the appropriate person to investigate these very serious allegations.

In spite of the fact that there is a lot of talk and wonderful words on that side of the House, Canadians just want to know the answer. Canadians want to know if the Communist government of China interfered in elections here in Canada. They want to know the answer.

The other thing that is quite fascinating is that the member talked about the great work in the PROC committee. Is he suggesting that reading the phone book is great work and a great use of Canadians' money? It is insane.

What is the answer?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I would point out that, in addition to serving as the governor general for seven years, Mr. Johnston was also the head of a number of Canadian institutions, university institutions. He is also an extensive and accomplished lawyer and professor of law. He will be well qualified to navigate this.

Yes, the hon. member is quite right. I did make reference to Stephen Harper and his acknowledgement that Mr. Johnston is the best of Canadians, in the spirit of taking this out of the domain of partisanship.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before I begin, I just want to ask to share my time with the member for Trois-Rivières. I understand that there is agreement.

This is an extremely serious subject. There are times in the House when members rise and talk about witnessing a moment in the history of Quebec or Canada. I believe this is the case today.

This is extremely serious. Democracy has been hit hard; I am talking about the Quebec and Canadian democracy. The power of the people, their power to decide who will represent them, is an outstanding system, if there is one.

My colleagues who, like me, have gone door knocking know that some people say that they are not sure whether they will vote. We then tell them that they need to vote and that it is important they do their civic duty. Sometimes, voters say that they do not feel like it. They ask whether it matters. We try to convince them that democracy is important to ensure that the country is managed the way people expect it to be. While we are there, we try to encourage them. People often respond that they have lost faith in democracy. We see that the voter turnout rate continues to decline.

Now, we are facing a totally crazy situation in which Canada's democracy has been attacked. It is important to be careful; we are talking about the Chinese government. We have learned that the Chinese government is attacking our democracy and trying to influence the vote. Who would have believed that another government, elsewhere in the world and even one far, far away, even if it is extremely powerful, would one day wield such influence? It is absolutely essential then—

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• (1310)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. I would ask any members who want to have a conversation to go out to the lobby.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, we could discuss it, but I think that the guardian of democracy in Canada is the Prime Minister of Canada. No one needs to be a math whiz or have a PhD to know that. We expect the Prime Minister to take to the trenches to defend democracy. Defending democracy means defending everyone here. It justifies our presence here and allows me to say that I was duly elected by the citizens of La Prairie.

Earlier, the Minister of Public Safety said that we should set partisanship aside. I totally agree. I would say that that has been the Bloc Québécois's *modus operandi* from the outset. We have to be honest, though. It is all well and good to say that we should set partisanship aside, but at some point we have to address the elephant in the room.

Last November, Global News reported that there was interference in 11 ridings in the 2019 election. They figured that was normal. First, they were unfamiliar with the ridings. They do not know whether the candidates promoted by the Chinese government were elected or not. They do not know how they did it. Our first reaction is that there should be an investigation.

We asked the Prime Minister to do something, but he refused and said nothing happened, the election was entirely above board, and we should not challenge the results. Then, the man who told us that we should set partisanship aside accused us of being anti-Chinese racists. Then, he told us that we were like Donald Trump and would be challenging the election. Speaking of partisanship, let us just say that the Prime Minister is pretty good at it.

He says he has no idea what we are talking about. He went to the G20 summit, where he followed the Chinese president around like he desperately needed a friend. He absolutely wanted to speak with him. When asked what he wanted to talk about, he said that he wanted to talk about Chinese interference, yet here he says that there was no interference. He told us we should not say that because it is not true, but the first chance he got to talk to the Chinese president, that is what he talked about. We were a bit confused, but let us move on.

That was just the tip of the iceberg. On February 17, we learned that the Chinese government also interfered in the 2021 election because it wanted us to elect a minority Liberal government, since it believes that a minority Liberal government is more sympathetic to its cause. That is what we learned from the media. We figured it was getting serious. It was no longer speculation. It was getting very serious.

On February 28, we learned that Chinese millionaire Zhang Bin, under pressure from the Chinese government, had given \$1 million to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation and McGill University. We figured there were ties with the government and perhaps the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. I know that we are not supposed to say the Prime Minister's name in the House, but it sounds a bit like that. We figured there was a problem.

Madam Speaker, I am looking at you carefully, because I am going to talk about your riding and, no surprise here, Chinese police stations. We knew that there were five of them in Canada, but on March 9 we learned that there were two more in Quebec, including one in the riding of Brossard—Saint-Lambert. This is worrisome, because we hear that Chinese police stations may have influenced the election results. I am not talking about you, Madam Speaker. I know that you fully earned your presence here, but since I am in the neighbouring riding, I see what is happening and it looks funny to me.

• (1315)

Let me continue. On March 16, we learned that Vancouver City Hall may have also been targeted by Chinese interference. An open letter from an unnamed CSIS agent caused an absolute uproar. In this anonymous letter, the agent said that what is happening in Canada is so serious that it represents the "gravest threat" to national security. He said that he was leaking this information because he loves his country, that he has voted for the Liberals in the past and that he has nothing against them, but that there are things going on and the government needs to take action. He said that CSIS keeps sounding the alarm, but that the government is not doing anything. According to him, the government did nothing when it was told that there was interference in 2019; it did nothing between 2019 and 2021 when it was told what was happening; and it did nothing in 2021 when it was told that there was interference and attempted influence.

I have only two minutes left and I want to talk about David Johnston. The way people have been talking about him, one would think he is Spider-Man. People are saying that he is going to fix everything because he is a great guy, when in fact, David Johnston once said that he feels at home when he goes to China. He is also a friend of the Prime Minister and his family, so we are not off to a very good start. David Johnston was a member of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, which is also not good. He was also the commissioner of the Leaders' Debates Commission in 2021. During the debate, the moderator suggested that Quebeckers are racist. He was the commissioner for the organization. Clearly, he is no Spider-Man. In committee, I asked him if he realized that Quebeckers were called racist during a debate he was running. I told him that an apology was called for, but he was never willing to apologize.

We are calling for an independent public inquiry because that is the right thing to do. The government needs to revoke the appointment of David Johnston as special rapporteur. He is not the right person for the job. This was a bad casting call. The Conservative motion has its flaws, and my colleague will talk about them in more detail later. It is not perfect. We would have liked for the Conservatives to call for an independent public inquiry. Time is of the essence. Given that we have a minority government, an election could be called tomorrow morning, before we have dealt with the issue of Chinese interference and developed the tools we need to hold a proper election where the dice are not loaded.

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[English]

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in the 2019 annual report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, the committee recommended to the Prime Minister that MPs should be briefed regularly on foreign interference. I asked the minister the same question earlier in the debate, and he refused to answer.

[Translation]

I have a simple question for my colleague from the Bloc. How many times in the past three years has the Bloc Québécois been briefed by the Liberal government on foreign interference in our elections?

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. If I check my notes, I see that that answer is zero.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, if we listened in particular to the Conservative and the Bloc opposition members, we would think that international interference is new to Canada. Not only has international interference taken place to some degree, whether in Canada, the United States or other allied countries, but we also know for a fact that there are countries that interfere. It is not just China; there are other nations that do likewise.

The member stands in his place asking what we are doing, but the government has done far more than whatever Stephen Harper and even the current leader of the Conservative Party did. We have put safeguards in place.

Would the member not, at the very least, recognize that international interference has been taking place and that, for the first time, we actually have a government that is doing something on it?

● (1320)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, my colleague says that interference is an international phenomenon and that more than one country is doing the interfering, and I agree with him. The problem is so bad and so prevalent that we should be taking steps to keep it from happening.

He is essentially saying that the situation here is no worse than anywhere else. I am sorry, but he is wrong. The Americans are very worried about what is happening in Canada, in their backyard, because we are doing nothing.

He says that tools have been used and created, but that is not true. If it were true, that official from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service would not have written an open letter. These people are dedicated to their cause. If the government had done its job, that official would not have blown the whistle to alert the media and the public to the fact that what is going on in Canada is critical and that we need to wake up because the government is doing nothing.

If it were true that the government had used and created tools, the official would not have blown the whistle. On this issue, I trust him far more than I trust anyone else.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, electoral reform is very serious for all democracy, not only internationally but also domestically. One of the things we did as an improvement was to get union and large corporation donations, which were there before, out of the system. In the past, foreign subsidiaries used to make massive donations to political parties.

In addition, we have even seen electoral issues domestically. We cannot forget that in 2011, we had the robocall scandal with the Conservative Party of Canada; later we had Dean Del Mastro led away to jail for electoral issues. Most recently, even some of the campaigns for electoral leaders have had interventions.

With regard to the international component, what other countries is the hon. member concerned about? What about the diasporas and other groups that are perhaps going to be blamed for some of the interventions by other state governments? I think it is important to recognize that we could have victimization of some individuals just because of the actions of politicians opening themselves to this; at the end of the day, foreign governments are really responsible, not Canadian citizens.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, clearly, with respect to Chinese police stations, it is paramount that we protect the people who are victims of the Chinese government's influence even though they no longer live in China and have become Canadians. Yes, we must ensure that these people can be protected from foreign interference.

The government must create an independent commission of public inquiry because individuals are at risk from this interference. That is why serious measures must be introduced to eliminate any form of interference on Quebec and Canadian soil.

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, foreign interference is a subject that we all agree on. Last week, when we were in our ridings, my constituents in Trois-Rivières talked to me about this at length. They have doubts, and when doubt gains a foothold, it is not a good thing for society, because anything can happen. I believe that we must all act in the public interest to dispel the doubts. When doubts persist, mistrust creeps in, and often defiance takes over. We do not want to see that. We do not live in Donald Trump's world. We do not want that.

If we want to understand a situation, we must evaluate what is happening and avoid making three mistakes. The first is to speak without being asked, which in itself is impertinent. The second is to remain silent when asked to speak, which is disingenuous. The third is to speak without taking note of the other person's reactions, which is being wilfully blind.

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Disingenuousness and willful blindness are what led to today's discussion. It was the Prime Minister who was being disingenuous and willfully blind by insisting for weeks that there was nothing going on and that everything had been taken care of. Suddenly, at the press conference announcing the miraculous advent of the special rapporteur, the government admitted that the same thing had happened in 2016, 2017, 2019 and other years. At last, as if by magic, something came out. Personally, I do not go in for disingenuous behaviour and willful blindness.

Let us look at the motion before us today. The Conservative Party, in the person of the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton, is proposing that all of the work of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and the Special Committee on the Canada—People's Republic of China Relationship be referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. It is an ambitious motion. One thing I noticed is that the motion calls for numerous witnesses to be invited to speak for several hours. I think it is calling everyone but my brother-in-law Luc.

I am the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. We already have our own work to do. We would be happy to take on this additional task, but things need to be done in the right order.

Right now, we are conducting a study on foreign interference. The motion says that we would receive the work that has already been done, but, at the same time, it gives us a very long list of witnesses to hear from. The committee does have some experience in this area, and in my opinion, these witnesses will confuse the issue. Not only is the list of witnesses long, but it is also missing a lot of relevant names, which is worrisome. We are okay with taking on the study in committee, but judging from the way this motion is written, I think we would still be at it in October 2025. It is unrealistic to think that these people will all come and provide helpful testimony in good faith and that we will achieve a result.

I believe that it is an understatement to say that our Prime Minister and his government are not particularly interested in foreign affairs. That is not what they like to do. In the span of a few years, we have seen several ministers come and go, yet when we know that diplomacy takes time, patience, and relationship building.

One advantage that China has over Canada is that the Chinese Communist Party was in power 50 years ago and will probably still be in power 50 years from now. It has the luxury of time. We, on the other hand, are in reactive mode.

Our Prime Minister has successfully leveraged Twitter diplomacy, but apparently he was the only one who did not know that interference was already happening and that things were going on. Everyone knew it, I knew it, and my brother-in-law Luc knew it too.

Last week in committee, we started studying foreign interference. I asked all the witnesses whether they thought the Canadian government understands China. The response was unanimous. There were Chinese Canadians, academics. They all said that the government does not understand China. I then asked whether the government knows China, and they said that it does not know China very well.

There is clearly a need to look deeper and reclaim relationships. China is moving slowly and stealthily, while we are trying something more spectacular.

● (1325)

China's actions are a bit like a silent transformation, like erosion. We might pass by a place one day and, several years later, the shoreline might look very different. The transformation is silent. We might not see the change, but it is happening. It is the same with interference. We do not see the change, but it is happening.

What should be done about this? Like everyone else, we in the Bloc Québécois want to know what happened. We want to know what happened, when it happened, who was involved, and who knew about it. We want to find out, but without too many witnesses and too narrow a focus. We are talking about interference in elections, but also in scientific research and technological patents on society itself. Several subjects are involved, so the focus can be much broader. Interference is not only electoral. Incidentally, for those who believe that China would ever try to dominate Canada, I think they are wrong. Influence is a problem, but there is more to it than just the election issue.

If this motion is adopted, I would also like for us to try to find out the truth in the interest of the public good and not in the interest of finding someone to blame. Some people might like to find someone to blame, but that does not get us very far. It is good to know what happened in the past so that we do not make the same mistakes, but what really interests me is what is happening in the present. What are we going to do so that these types of things do not happen again in the future? That is another aspect.

As I was saying, before the special rapporteur was appointed, the Prime Minister did not know anything. Since then, he has admitted to taking several steps. I also have a problem with the special rapporteur. I worked in the field of ethics long enough to understand that a conflict of interest does not necessarily exist just because someone knows someone. However, when there are serious reasons for doubt, then appearances would suggest that there is something there. Ethically speaking, the close ties between Mr. Johnston and Mr. Trudeau are unacceptable.

● (1330)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would remind the member that we do not refer to current members by name in the House.

The member for Trois-Rivières.

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying, the close relationship between the Prime Minister and the rapporteur is troubling. It concerns me from an ethics standpoint. I think it would be in the government's interest not to rely on this rapporteur to shed light on the matter. There are too many grey areas at this time, and we do not like that.

It appears as though he will be the judge and jury. That may not be the case, but that is what it looks like. That is what I am hearing from the people of Trois-Rivières. It is in my interest to ensure that my constituents understand what is going on. For them to understand, we need to get to the bottom of this.

What will the rapporteur actually do? The rapporteur could call for a public inquiry. If that happens, we will have wasted time. The rapporteur could say there will be no public inquiry. In that case, I do not know what will happen, but something will have to be done, because it does not make sense. A public, independent and transparent inquiry is necessary.

This is interesting, philosophically speaking. The word “necessary” refers to something that must be done, so we intend to push for an independent public inquiry and get to the bottom of this.

Before I close, I would like to say a few words about the committee. The committee is sovereign and can choose its mandates. In this case, the mandate is coming from the House. It is prepared to tackle it. I hope I can count on the collaboration of my colleagues, whom we will support, so that we can reduce the number of witnesses and add certain other witnesses who are just as important. When we look at something like this, as Oscar Wilde said, “the truth is rarely pure and never simple”.

To remove any doubt, the Prime Minister needs to call public, independent and transparent public inquiry. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion, but not just any motion.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the comments by my colleague from Trois-Rivières. His professional experience is very useful to us in this debate.

Earlier he mentioned the rapporteur. I would like to come back to that.

I think that all Canadians recognize that the person the Prime Minister appointed as rapporteur is a great Canadian who has had an admirable career and is well known for his charity work. Indeed, people are entitled to have friends and to be a friend of the Prime Minister. However, when someone is called to take a close look at the Prime Minister's work and the impact it had, that is where things change.

The current rapporteur appointed by the Prime Minister is on the board of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. We have nothing against the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, but let us not forget that the foundation received \$200,000 from people who are very close to the Communist government in Beijing.

This is my question for my colleague from Trois-Rivières whose job it is to analyze matters of ethics and conflict of interest: Why does he think that the Prime Minister's appointment does nothing at all to reassure Canadians?

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very pertinent question.

The appointment of a rapporteur who has ties to the Prime Minister will not in any way protect the Prime Minister from himself.

As an ethicist, I think this decision is a huge red flag. I believe that in this situation, we must make it possible for people to once again trust the government, and that is not possible with these perceived ties—which are not just perceived, they are actually real.

I am not questioning Mr. Johnston's competence. I am saying that, in these circumstances, this appointment is unacceptable.

### *Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think everyone in this House takes the issue very seriously and would like to see conclusions and proper recommendations on what we can do to improve our resiliency against foreign interference.

I think the issue before us right now is the manner in which the opposition is trying to create political theatre, so to speak, by demanding that chiefs of staff come for three hours alone, without anyone else with them, and be sworn in beforehand. These are quite literally unprecedented moves.

There are countless people out there, including Conservatives, former Conservative campaign managers, former Conservative senators and the leader of the NDP, who do not think the committee is the best place to deal with this. The leader of the NDP recently said that he did not think that the committee was the best place to deal with this because of the way the opposition is trying to score political points.

Could the member from the Bloc weigh in on what he thinks is the best place for this discussion to occur so that we have impartiality and Canadians get the answers they are looking for?

• (1335)

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, although it pains me to say so, I have to admit that I agree in part with my colleague.

We must determine what is the best forum, but I will go a little further. This matter must not be addressed in a partisan way because it is an issue of public interest. In the interest of the public, we must get to the bottom of this so we can take action. I believe that the forum is not as important as the fact that we must take action by rising above partisan sparring and seeking out this care for the public interest, which is sorely lacking on both sides of the House.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was well-thought-out, as usual.

We agree on the need for an independent and transparent public inquiry into foreign interference. The NDP is concerned that the focus here is on just one state, namely the Chinese government. Yes, there are very serious allegations involving China, but focusing solely on China stigmatizes Quebecers and Canadians who are Chinese nationals. We hear that a lot from people on the ground.

Does my colleague agree that the mandate should be expanded to include all foreign interference, including that of Iran or Russia, for example?

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I really enjoy hearing from my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

China does not have a monopoly on interference. That would be my first point.

*Business of Supply*

Also, we have to be very careful because, when we talk about the Chinese Communist Party interfering, we are not saying that allegations should be made against Chinese Canadians. That is very different. We have to be careful not to stigmatize people unnecessarily by stigmatizing a community. It is the Chinese Communist Party that is the problem here.

I agree with my colleague that China does not have a monopoly on interference.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to talk more about the NDP and our position on holding a public inquiry.

I recently had the pleasure of attending meetings of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs when our usual representative, the member for North Island—Powell River, was in her riding. Unfortunately, at that time, attending meetings virtually was not an option. As a result, I spent several days with my colleagues from the House Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

As everyone already knows, the NDP succeeded in passing a motion that was then debated in the House. This week, perhaps even tomorrow, we intend to introduce this motion which calls for a public, transparent and independent inquiry. That is extremely important. Later in my speech, I will read the motion that we hope to introduce in the House tomorrow so that the vote can take place in the coming days.

There is no doubt in our minds. The member for Burnaby South, our national leader, has already stated numerous times that holding a public, transparent and independent inquiry is extremely important. Nothing less would satisfy Canadians' need for answers to all the questions raised as a result of all the articles published not only over the past few weeks but also over the past few years.

As members know, there was a convoy last year that had a stranglehold on Ottawa. It was a very dark and sad time for the residents of Ottawa. Seniors could no longer go grocery shopping, people with disabilities could not get their medications and there was the incessant noise, which prevented families from sleeping at night. Furthermore, hundreds of businesses had to remain closed. After the departure of this so-called freedom convoy, which breached the freedoms of the people of Ottawa, we learned from a series of articles published in Canada's National Observer that there were ties to Russian actors and the Russian government and its institutions.

There is no denying that the issue of interference has been simmering for a long time. It is something that must be on people's minds. When we look at recent reports of interference by the Chinese government and other state actors, some very worrisome facts have come to light. Although everyone agrees that this did not affect the outcome of the election, the allegations are serious. It seems as though the Chinese government interfered in Canada's affairs. Furthermore, some of these revelations raise concerns that election laws may have been broken.

We really need to take this seriously. I remember some election laws being violated under the Harper government. Examples include the in-and-out scandal and the Dean Del Mastro situation. Such violations of election laws are criminal.

• (1340)

We are talking about allegations of money being given, services and goods being provided and boundaries being crossed. These disturbing allegations truly call for a transparent and public national inquiry, in my view and that of our caucus and our party.

It is worth noting that this is exceptional. Our election laws protect us all. There are strict election spending limits. We are not like the United States, where people can spend as much as they like. Candidates can receive secret donations, donations that are not transparent.

Our election laws place limits on how much people can spend. In my riding of New Westminster—Burnaby, my 100,000 constituents are my bosses. They are well aware that all candidates are limited to spending roughly \$100,000. This limit is strictly enforced, as we saw in the Dean Del Mastro situation. The former Conservative MP did jail time because he tried to hide the fact that he had exceeded the spending limit.

Allegations of involvement by the Chinese government or Chinese agents mean that this spending limit could have been exceeded.

Second, the fact that candidates can only receive donations from Canadian citizens or Canadian residents is an aspect of the Elections Act that is strictly enforced. Gone are the days when people could give \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000 to a candidate or party. There are strict limits.

This year, the limit on the amount people can give is \$1,675. That cannot be exceeded. Whoever tries to exceed it is breaking the Canada Elections Act. Under the previous Harper government, the Conservative Party tried to play around with that, but donations are strictly limited by the act.

The third aspect that is also important is the issue of donations of goods or services. Again, the limit is \$1,675 for someone who wants to donate services or contribute in that way. It is the business value that counts. For example, a business owner who wants to donate space to any party is limited by the commercial value of that property. If the commercial value of the property exceeds \$1,675, it is clearly a violation of the Elections Act, as it is not permitted. The candidate must give, must provide, must pay the full commercial value. Contributions of goods and services must be strictly limited. These are contributions that are limited to a value to \$1,675, as are financial contributions.

These three limitations are consistent with the law. They cannot be exceeded, and to do so is an unequivocal violation of the law.

• (1345)

The allegations reported by The Globe and Mail and Global News are troubling, because they point to a possible attempt to circumvent election laws. We cannot just leave it at that. We really need to get to the bottom of things. That is why the NDP called for a public inquiry and why the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs agreed that one was necessary.



Tomorrow, the NDP will move a motion that I believe reflects the will of the vast majority of Canadians. There is no doubt about it, because people want answers to all the questions about the allegations reported by The Globe and Mail and Global News. They also want answers about the allegations of Russian interference reported last year by the National Observer. These are all important aspects.

It is not just the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South, who called for a national public inquiry that is both independent and transparent. The former director of CSIS, Richard Fadden, also said that a public inquiry was absolutely necessary. Jean-Pierre Kingsley, a man for whom I have an enormous amount of respect, also called for a national public inquiry, as the former head of Elections Canada. Artur Wilczynski, a former senior official at the Communications Security Establishment, is calling for an inquiry as well.

These people certainly talked about interference by the Chinese government, but also interference by the Russian government and that of Iran. All of them support the NDP's call for a public inquiry. That will be tomorrow's debate. That is what the NDP wants to propose. We want every MP to be able to vote this week on having a national public inquiry.

The government says it appointed a rapporteur and that is why it is setting aside the idea of a national public inquiry, but the two are not mutually exclusive. It is true that under the former Harper government, a rapporteur was appointed to address the scandals around Airbus and former prime minister Brian Mulroney, but, as we know, this very quickly led to a public inquiry. It is very clear, in my opinion, that the idea of appointing a rapporteur does not preclude this possibility and this need to launch a national public inquiry.

That is what our leader, the member for Burnaby South, and the entire NDP caucus will be speaking about tomorrow in the House. We will argue that this requires a national public inquiry, as indicated by all the people I have mentioned.

Today's motion is nothing like any motion the NDP would have moved. It does include some positive aspects and others that are curious, such as the request to call the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the long list of people to call. The list does not necessarily offend me, in the sense that there is some logic to it. However, it omits a lot of people.

• (1350)

For example, the NDP introduced a motion at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to call certain witnesses identified in the Conservative motion, as well as others. I thank the chair of this committee for her work, because long meetings were held over several days.

To be clear, the allegations concern both the Liberal and Conservative parties. It is important to remember that nine Liberal candidates and two Conservative candidates were the subject of allegations of foreign interference. Since both parties are implicated, we suggested to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that the Conservative and Liberal national campaign directors be called as witnesses.

### *Business of Supply*

We also talked about inviting Jennie Byrne, given the allegations that I already mentioned about the Russian government's involvement in the so-called freedom convoy, as reported in the National Observer. So many people in Ottawa were robbed of their freedom during that time. These are important details.

Now, I want to take the time to read the report that we hope to table tomorrow and to talk about various principles in the Conservatives' motion that appear to be somewhat contradictory.

[*English*]

First, I want to read, for the record, the report that the NDP is tabling tomorrow.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, March 2, 2023, the committee has considered the matter of foreign election interference.

Your committee calls on the Government of Canada to launch a national public inquiry into allegations of foreign interference in Canada's democratic system, including but not limited to allegations of interference in general elections by foreign governments;

That this inquiry be granted all the necessary powers to call witnesses from the government and from political parties;

That this inquiry investigates abuse of diaspora groups by hostile foreign governments;

That this inquiry have the power to order and review all documents it deems necessary for this work, including documents which are related to national security;

That the individual heading this inquiry be selected by unanimous agreement by the House Leaders of the officially recognized parties in the House of Commons; and

That this inquiry does not impede or stop the committee's study on foreign election interference, including the production of documents and the calling of witnesses.

The 25th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is what the NDP will be tabling in the House tomorrow for debate and for a vote. At this point, we are certainly hoping that there will be a consensus from the House of Commons, to say, very clearly, to the Prime Minister that a national public inquiry is needed.

A final point that I want to make is on the contradiction between the Conservative motion today and their past principles, in terms of ministerial responsibility. I want to cite the member for Carleton, who answered a question in the House back in 2010. I certainly remember that. The idea was that, instead of summoning the minister who was responsible, it would summon a member of staff.

The member for Carleton said, "Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that for hundreds of years, the principle of ministerial accountability has been paramount here in the House and in its committees. We will continue to respect that principle in order to improve and build a Canada where politicians are accountable."

At that point, he was saying no, of course, to having staff appear at committee. It is a bit of a contradiction now.

*Statements by Members*

I think I have outlined the importance of what the NDP will be bringing to the House tomorrow on the public inquiry. That is certainly where most Canadians are. Canadians want to see a public inquiry that is transparent and independent. The NDP has made that happen at the procedure and House affairs committee. It will really be up to all members of Parliament to heed the debate tomorrow and to also ultimately vote on that question this week.

• (1355)

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the NDP House leader's speech, and I am interested in the motion and debate that will take place on what they are going to put forward tomorrow.

Today, we are talking about the Conservative opposition day motion, and that is to have the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, testify at committee on what she knew, when she knew it and whether the Prime Minister was briefed on that.

My question is very clear, it will not take much time and we will be able to get to the next item on the rubric at 2 p.m., right on time, because he can answer yes or no. Will the NDP members be propping up a corrupt government, or will they be on the side of Canadians and voting for the Prime Minister's chief of staff to testify, yes or no?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the member is actually citing his leader, the member for Carleton, who would have voted no for the Conservative motion back in 2010, which is why I was quoting this Conservative contradiction that the member for Carleton voted no on the same principle of the motion back in 2010. We have this contradiction with what Conservatives have said, what they have done in the past and what they are proposing this time.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Saturday, on *The House* on CBC, the leader of the NDP said, "up to this point...I have seen the committee and the way [it operates] is more...a forum for scoring [political] points on each other. The Conservatives are trying to score points on the Liberals". He goes on to say, "and so, that to me is the wrong use of...resources, the fact that a committee that is being used [for] a partisan way to score points on something as important as democracy".

This member actually said, at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, on February 21, "I caution on the issue of inviting staff." He further goes on to say, "Around the issue of political staff, as opposed to having ministers being brought forward to testify, I support having ministers come forward to explain what they did and what they knew—

• (1400)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I need to give a few seconds to the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby to answer.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the right use of resources is putting into place a national public inquiry on foreign interference now, to make sure it is independent and to make it transparent. That is what the will of the House, I think, will be this week, and that is why the NDP is presenting the motion tomorrow.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[*English*]

**NOWRUZ**

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today is Nowruz, which means "new day" in Persian. Yesterday, I was pleased to host a Nowruz celebration on Parliament Hill with the participation of about 700 Canadians of Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghan, Turkey and Kazak heritage, and other Canadians.

Nowruz is a time of renewal, new beginnings and shared aspirations of hope and optimism for the year ahead. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many communities that observe Nowruz and the important contributions they make to Canada.

I would also like to recognize Alma Rahmani for her hard work in assisting my office in organizing the Nowruz event. I would like to recognize Mendi Fallahi and Nigar Aliyeva who received an award for their service to their communities in Canada.

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**LGBTIQ RIGHTS**

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in over 70 countries today, the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer individuals are criminalized. In 12 of those countries, consensual same-sex conduct may be punished by death. Their only crime is being themselves.

On July 1, 1960, on the eve of the passage of the Canadian Bill of Rights, Prime Minister Diefenbaker declared, in this House, his pledge to uphold our heritage of freedom for all mankind. That pledge was a call to action for all Canadians. In our world today, the LGBTIQ community is not free. Prime Minister Diefenbaker's call to action rings true again today.

Each and every one of us is called to make Canada more than a mere symbol of freedom. Canada must be a champion for freedom, human rights and dignity for all people, not just here but around the world.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE**

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today is the International Day of La Francophonie. More than 320 million francophones around the world celebrate this day.

I particularly want to recognize the work of organizations such as the FCFA, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada; the FESFO, the Fédération de la jeunesse franc-ontarienne; the AFO, the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario; the ACFSOs in Prescott and Russell, Ottawa and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry; and all other Canadian organizations that every day advocate for the protection and promotion of the French language.

Art and culture promote and disseminate a language. That is why I encourage all Canadians to discover our francophone artists in person or online. I am thinking in particular of artists such as Prospect Nelson, Les Rats d'Swompe, Melissa Ouimet and, of course, Katherine Levac. All these artists are from eastern Ontario.

As the international president of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, or APF, and as a proud Franco-Ontarian, I wish the 91 member branches of the APF an excellent International Day of La Francophonie. Long live the Francophonie.

\* \* \*

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the International Day of La Francophonie was created in 1988 by the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie to give the 88 member states an opportunity to celebrate their common bond: the French language.

At home in Trois-Rivières, we celebrate La Francophonie all year long. We have the International Poetry Festival, a book fair and the Association des écoles festives de théâtre. In addition, this year, two well-known people from my riding will be awarded the Ordre de la Pléiade. This honour recognizes the work of Robert Aubin, former member of Parliament for Trois-Rivières, as well as Louise Lacoursière, a best-selling author from Trois-Rivières. They have both made their mark by supporting and promoting the ideals of the francophone community.

La Francophonie is not France. La Francophonie is all those who speak, think, live and study in French, wherever and whoever they are. La Francophonie is a shared language, culture, identity and set of values.

I want to personally invite everyone in Trois-Rivières to participate in the activities celebrating International Francophonie Day. Together we speak French and together we are stronger. Long live La Francophonie.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

#### NOWRUZ

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at 5:24:28 p.m. today, 300 million people around the world will gather around the haft-seen table to mark the Persian new year, Nowruz. Celebrated by many ethnicities, religions and countries, Nowruz embodies a brighter future and victory over darkness. This mirrors what is unfolding in Iran, as its people are on a quest for a free and peaceful nation.

#### Statements by Members

In the name of the “women, life, freedom” movement, we, in my household, are symbolizing the seven items of the 1402 haft-seen table in the following way: *sabzeh*, the rebirth of a nation that fosters liberty; *samanu*, the power and strength of Iranian women and youth; *senjed*, the love of Iranians for their motherland; *seeb*, hospitality and compassion for the Iranian people; *serkeh*, decades of perseverance in the face of repression; *sekkeh*, a future full of opportunities for young people to prosper; and finally, *seer*, the health and well-being of Iran as a nation.

[Member spoke in Farsi]

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier and an ardent defender of the French fact, today, March 20, I am proud to mark the 53rd International Day of La Francophonie.

This year, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie chose “321 million francophones, billions of cultural content” as their theme in order to celebrate the diversity of francophone cultural creation and emphasize the importance of ensuring that it can be easily accessed online.

Language does not belong to a country or region. It belongs to the individual, and only the individual can determine its future and survival. The modernization of the Official Languages Act is one way to stop the decline of French, but we also all need to do our part to stop the decline of French. As francophones, we need to establish a strong presence, while respecting the other language.

[English]

We need to work together to keep our country bilingual. The French language is not a rival; rather, it is a distinctive force.

[Translation]

Let us be proud of our country's English-French bilingualism today and throughout the year. We need to take action now.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### NOWRUZ

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, March 20, marks Nowruz, the festival of new beginnings and rejuvenation. Observed on this day, the spring equinox, Nowruz is celebrated by numerous cultures around the world, including Persian, Afghan, Bahá'í, Ismaili and Kurdish peoples.

*Statements by Members*

This past week, I had the pleasure of hosting a Nowruz celebration in my riding, which has one of the largest populations of Iranian Canadians and Afghan Canadians in the country. Our entire York Region Liberal caucus joined with the local community. We all want to extend a huge thanks to our Prime Minister, who took time to join us in support of the Iranian Canadian community. Whether to celebrate a festival of prosperity and new beginnings or to hold the Iran regime accountable for injustices perpetrated against its people, our government always stands with the Iranian Canadian community.

I also had the opportunity to attend a Nowruz celebration hosted by the Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Immigrant Services. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet with so many vibrant and dynamic community leaders and to experience the cultural traditions of dance, poetry and music of the Afghan community.

Even as Canadians from different backgrounds celebrate Nowruz, we cannot forget the continuing struggle of the Iranian and Afghan people against human rights abuses and for equal rights for women. Canada and Canadians stand with all people in their fight for democratic liberties.

To everyone celebrating Nowruz today, let me say *Har Ruz etan Nowrouz, Nowruz etan Pyrouz*. Happy Nowruz.

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[*Translation*]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE**

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, March 20 marks the International Day of La Francophonie, and this year's theme is "321 million francophones, a world of cultural content".

This day celebrates the French language. Some 10.4 million Canadians speak French. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages, I want to thank all of our partners, including the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA, and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, or OIF. Their work strengthens ties among our large francophone family and enhances our cultural and linguistic diversity.

This is a very important day because it gives us the opportunity to celebrate our culture and pride in our identity. I want to extend special congratulations to the 12 francophone school boards across Ontario and, in my region, Nipissing, Sudbury and Nickel Belt, which are celebrating their 25th anniversary.

I invite all francophones and francophiles to celebrate our language, our culture and our heritage.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[*English*]

**NOWRUZ**

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish Canadians of Kurdish, Persian and central Asian heritage a very happy Nowruz, as this day marks the start of their new year.

Nowruz is an ancient new year celebration adopted by many central Asian peoples. For Kurds, this new year will be 2723, and the word "Nowruz" literally means a new year, marking the first day of their spring. In Kurdistan, Kurds will light fires and fireworks and will be heading to the mountains of Akre, credited as and considered the home of the celebration of Nowruz. Azerbaijanis will serve sweets like baklava and shorgoghal. I have had mine already. Persians will set the haft-seen table with the seven primary items beginning with the letter "s" in their alphabet. The traditions are as varied as the people, their histories and their values.

I thank the Kurdish Vancouver community in Burnaby for inviting me to celebrate their new year with the lighting of their bonfire, representing new life.

*Newroz piroz be. Nowruz etan Pyrouz.*

\* \* \*

**RAMADAN**

**Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday, March 22, Muslims across the world, including me, several members of this House and many of my constituents in Brampton Centre, will begin the month-long observance of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a time of patience, compassion and generosity that ultimately brings us closer to our loved ones and our communities. As we abstain from food and drink from dawn to sunset and gather for prayers, we reflect on our blessings and are driven to give back to our communities through volunteering and charity. As a time of charity and spiritual contemplation, Ramadan reminds us to put others' needs before our own and reinstates the incredible importance of community.

To the almost two million Muslims in Canada and the almost two billion around the world, *Ramadan Mubarak*.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**TRAGIC EVENTS**

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, terrible tragedies have happened in Quebec, just days apart.

On Thursday, a fire in Old Montreal cost the life of at least one person, with six others still missing.

On Friday, three people from the same family lost their lives following a murderous attack in the Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie neighbourhood, also in Montreal. This crime was exceptionally violent. It shocked everyone in the community and saddened the entire province, which had just witnessed another tragic event.

*Statements by Members*

In Amqui, a pickup truck crashed into 11 people who were strolling down the street, enjoying the spring weather. Three people died and several others were seriously injured.

In tragic moments like these, let us spare a thought for the victims and for their loved ones, who are feeling such deep sorrow. On behalf of my leader and my political party, I offer my deepest condolences to all those affected.

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[English]

**HATE CRIME**

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a group of thugs attacked a 21-year-old student in Kelowna on Friday night after he rode the bus. They severely beat him, but that was not enough for these low-lives: They removed his turban and dragged him on the street by his hair. This was a hate crime committed by cowards who should be punished severely.

Everyone here will agree that this senseless act of race-based violence is unacceptable, but we need to do more. These cowards thought they could do whatever they wanted because they did not think anyone would stop them. We need to ensure that anyone who walks our streets can do so without fear of violence. Right now our justice system is not tough enough. We must make meaningful changes to protect the public and make everyone feel safe on the streets again.

If people expect nothing more than a slap on the wrist, that is part of the problem. Let us all hope that this student recovers fully and that his attackers are caught and face real consequences for the pain and indignity they imposed on this man.

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● (1415)

**HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN**

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, many here in Canada and across the world will gather to celebrate Nowruz. The spring equinox represents hope, optimism and renewal. To all those celebrating, *Nowruz Pirooz*. This is a time to count our blessings and look forward to the year ahead with renewed vim and vigour.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that for many marking Nowruz today, the last year has represented much heartache and hardship. In Afghanistan, the Taliban is systematically marginalizing women and withholding from all girls the right to education and the promise of inclusive tomorrows. Minorities such as the Hazaras have also seen their civic rights severely restricted.

The same can be said of the Iranian regime, which has responded to the yearnings of freedom and justice by courageous women and youth by unleashing violent repression and incarcerating well over 20,000 Iranians. The regime has also been particularly heavy handed with minorities in Khuzestan, Kurdistan and Baluchistan. More recently, it has come to light that more than 1,200 unsuspecting school-age girls have been systematically poisoned by the Iranian regime.

Despite these injustices, we continue to see brazen acts of defiance and heroism, so while I would like to congratulate everyone who is ushering in a new year today, let me also remind members of this House that we must do more to support those who are denied the fundamental rights that we each hold dear and cherish at home.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House on behalf of the NDP to mark the International Day of La Francophonie, an important day for celebrating and promoting our beautiful French language.

The French language originated in Europe, but it is also entrenched here in North America, in the Arab world and especially in Africa, which is now the continent with the largest number of francophones. This year's theme, "321 million francophones, a world of cultural content", places an emphasis on the diversity of francophone culture within the Francophonie and for francophiles around the world.

A language is much more than vocabulary and grammar. It is also a vision, a way of looking at the world and telling our stories. It is important that French-language works be available and discoverable, especially in the new world of digital broadcasting. That is why the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie is focusing on the discoverability of francophone content.

That is good timing, because most members of the House have been working on this issue in the context of Bill C-11. There is still work to be done for the French language, but we have taken a step in the right direction. Let us continue doing that with the rest of the world.

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**TRAGEDY IN AMQUI**

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on March 13, an act of unspeakable violence was committed in my hometown of Amqui.

Three people were killed, and eight others were injured. Others are still fighting for their lives. Our small community was shaken to its core by this tragedy, which has left many families in mourning and pain, as well as angry and bewildered.

Despite a great sense of injustice, the residents in the area are standing strong. Our tight-knit community is coming together to console one another and pull together. On behalf of my people, I want to express our deep gratitude to all the first responders whose bravery allowed lives to be saved.

*Oral Questions*

Today, our community is struggling yet stands stronger and more united than ever. I want to pay tribute to the victims of this terrible tragedy. I offer my sincerest condolences to their families and loved ones. My thoughts are with the injured, the witnesses and all those affected in any way.

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[English]

**BRETT RYAN AND TRAVIS JORDAN**

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week in Edmonton, two brave police officers were killed in the line of duty while they were serving and protecting our community. Thirty-year-old Constable Brett Ryan, who served the Edmonton Police Service for five and a half years, was also involved locally as a hockey referee. He and his wife were expecting their first child. Thirty-five-year-old Constable Travis Jordan, who served the Edmonton Police Service for eight and a half years, was known as kind and compassionate and was always willing to help out a neighbour.

Losing these two heroes is a devastating and profound loss for their families and loved ones and, of course, for our entire Edmonton community. Let us all recognize and appreciate the bravery and sacrifice of all law enforcement officers, who put their lives on the line to keep us all safe.

I know all of our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of Constable Jordan and Constable Ryan, as well as with the entire Edmonton Police Service at this very difficult time.

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• (1420)

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE**

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a happy International Day of Happiness, a happy spring and, most of all, a happy 36th International Day of La Francophonie.

The French language is part of our history. The language of Molière unites us and makes us unique. It allows us to connect with francophone communities in Canada and around the world. It is a language with a thousand accents that offers an invaluable social, cultural and economic advantage to those who master it.

We should be proud that French is one of our country's official languages. We should not take it for granted. We should all promote French and we should all continue to work to protect French. As Gilles Vigneault says, "La Francophonie is a vast nation without borders. It is the nation of the French language. It is an inner nation. It is the invisible, spiritual, mental, moral nation within us all".

Let us keep taking care of our collective heritage, which sets us apart in the English-speaking ocean of North America, and keep celebrating it. Let us be proud of French.

[English]

**EDMONTON POLICE OFFICERS**

**The Speaker:** Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in honour of the fallen police officers in Edmonton, Alberta.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[Translation]

**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, I am announcing that the Conservative Party is willing to let all its staff testify about Beijing's interference. The members of the Liberal team, a party that received help from Beijing, should do exactly the same thing.

Katie Telford was in charge of the Prime Minister's leadership campaign and headed several campaigns for the Liberal Party during two elections that we know were subject to interference.

Will the NDP leader let her testify, yes or no?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader knows very well that we take foreign interference very seriously. That is why, in 2015, we put in place a number of measures that did not exist when the opposition leader was the minister responsible in previous years. We further strengthened the measures to address foreign interference.

Last week, we announced the appointment of the Right Hon. David Johnston as an independent special rapporteur. We will continue to take this situation very seriously.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we now know, from leaked intelligence reports, that the Liberal Party received help in multiple elections from the Communist government in Beijing, which wanted to keep the Prime Minister in place. We know that his top campaign officials, such as Katie Telford, would have been aware of this help, and we need to know exactly what she knew and what the Prime Minister knew. Only she can answer these questions, but only the leader of the NDP will decide. He has the deciding vote.

The question is this: Will he help his boss, the Prime Minister, cover up, or will he vote for the Prime Minister's chief of staff to testify? Which is it?

*Oral Questions*

● (1425)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows very well that our government has always been very transparent with Canadians in the efforts we have made to counter foreign interference in our democratic institutions. It is something the Conservatives can claim to have done nothing about.

The foreign affairs minister and I were before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs last week. We were happy to answer questions. The Prime Minister took a very important step last week in announcing the Right Hon. David Johnston as an independent special rapporteur, and we look forward to implementing his recommendations on what more can be done.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question was for the NDP leader. I do not know, but if he is part of the government, he should be able to get up to answer questions. I do not know why he is hiding behind his Liberal bosses again. His job is to work for the people, not to work for the Prime Minister, but now we are hearing rumours, and they are unconfirmed, that he is going to help the Liberals cover up this scandal by blocking the Prime Minister's chief of staff from testifying about what she knew about Beijing's assistance to the Liberal Party in multiple elections.

Will the NDP leader stand up to answer the question? Will he help the Prime Minister cover up, or will he stand up for the truth?

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, election interference is something that we have taken seriously on this side of the House since we first got elected in 2015. Unlike the members opposite, when the Leader of the Opposition was in charge of democratic institutions, he stood idly by and did nothing. For 10 years that is what that government did.

Since we were elected in 2015, we have been seized with this issue. We have made election security a priority. We have put in oversight processes. This is an issue that is important to Canadians, and it is important to us on this side of the House.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, waiting lists for medical treatment have doubled to 26 weeks. Some 6,000 Canadians do not have family doctors, and we rank 26th among OECD countries in terms of physicians per capita. We have 10,000 immigrants and other Canadians trained abroad who are qualified physicians.

When will the Prime Minister work with the provinces to establish a test and a licence so that we can tap into the pool of all those brilliant doctors?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to remind my hon. colleague that on February 7, 2023, we announced a total investment of \$198 billion to help Canadians access better health care. In addition, as part of the

agreement with all the provinces and territories, everyone agreed to boost and facilitate the recognition of skills acquired here at home or abroad.

I am very pleased that my colleague from the opposition is also interested in this issue.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it does not matter how much money we spend. As long as we are banning 19,000 foreign-trained doctors and 34,000 foreign-trained nurses from entering into the profession, we will not have enough people delivering the service.

We have had a national testing standard for the trades for 70 years in this country, but nothing similar exists in the professions. There is the Red Seal program for the trades. We should have a blue seal for the professions. It should be merit based, based on what people prove they can do in a national test, and it should allow them to practise across the country. Will the Prime Minister get up to make it happen?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is happening. All provinces have now sent a letter, in principle committing to implementing a national credential recognition. It is happening in Atlantic Canada. It is happening in Ontario, and it is happening in British Columbia, with the leadership of this government.

Obviously, the words and support from the opposition leader also matter, but more importantly, the actions on the part of the government matter very much.

\* \* \*

● (1430)

[Translation]

**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Mr. Alain Thérien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that the opposition parties have unanimously called for a public inquiry, and despite the fact that the public is calling for one too, the Prime Minister is being stubborn and has unilaterally appointed a special rapporteur who is anything but independent. The public's trust in the electoral system is at stake.

It seems to me that the primary duty of a prime minister is to ensure that democracy is healthy.

Can the Prime Minister assume his responsibilities, revoke the appointment of the special rapporteur and launch an independent public inquiry?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we obviously share the sentiments of our hon. colleague about the importance of protecting democracy and democratic institutions, as well as maintaining and strengthening the trust Canadians have in those institutions.

That is precisely what we did last week when we asked the Right Hon. David Johnston to act as an independent special rapporteur, to look at the full suite of measures that we have put in place since we formed government and to make public recommendations as to the next steps. We will obviously follow those recommendations.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, using “Johnston” and “independent” in the same sentence does not work.

We are not blaming Mr. Johnston for being a member of the Trudeau foundation. We are not blaming him for having a cottage next door to the Prime Minister's. We are not blaming him for being a close friend of the family. We are not even blaming him for saying that he felt at home when he went on a trip to China.

We are not blaming Mr. Johnston for anything. However, for the Prime Minister to select Mr. Johnston out of the 38 million people he had to choose from, he must be doing it on purpose. He must enjoy being his own worst enemy.

Can the Prime Minister help his friend out of this mess and do as everyone is asking and immediately set up an independent public commission of inquiry?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think that all Canadians recognize Mr. Johnston's important contributions in a number of areas. Not only did he serve as governor general of Canada, but he was also the dean of a university law school. He is an eminent Canadian. He will work independently to make recommendations, look at all of the measures that we implemented as a government and make suggestions as to how we can continue to improve.

I think that my hon. colleague should recognize this important act on the part of Mr. Johnston.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, people are wondering why it is taking so long for the Prime Minister to launch a public and independent inquiry into allegations of foreign interference. Such suspicions are serious and deserve a serious response.

It is all fine and well to appoint a rapporteur, but it will mean nothing if his mandate does not include a public and independent inquiry to get to the bottom of things. That is essential to getting answers and reassuring people about our electoral system.

Will the Prime Minister mandate his rapporteur to hold a public, independent and transparent inquiry on foreign interference?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has certainly taken the issue of foreign interference seriously. That was far from being the case before we formed government in 2015.

We introduced a series of measures, including the creation, under the act, of an all-party committee that will review and examine all these national security concerns.

The Right Hon. David Johnston will go even further. He will review the measures currently in place, which we consider robust and which have been publicly described as such. We will follow Mr. Johnston's recommendations.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CHILD CARE**

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, child care workers are leaving the sector and provinces are not recruiting enough staff, making it tougher for parents to find spaces. Why is this? It is because of inadequate benefits, the working conditions and wages that do not cover the bills. This is not a worker shortage. It is a wage shortage, a respect shortage and a dignity shortage.

The Liberals promised personal support workers at least \$25 an hour. Will the minister make the same commitment for child care workers today?

● (1435)

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her work and her support of our important work on child care.

In the Canada-wide agreement we have signed with all provinces and territories, the provinces and territories have committed to ensuring that they are able to recruit and retain ECEs. We know that ECEs and child care workers form the backbone of our child care system. Within those agreements, they can use some of that money to help with wage increases. In fact, we have seen that in many provinces and territories across the country. We will continue to work with PTs to make sure that we are supporting our ECEs right across the country.

\* \* \*

**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been weeks and more than 20 hours of talking out the clock in the cover-up from the government. Liberal MPs will do anything possible to keep the Prime Minister's chief of staff from testifying at the House affairs committee on what she knew about Beijing's election interference. Instead of the NDP showing some courage and standing up against the cover-up, it is no surprise that it looks like they are going to support it.

Will the Prime Minister stop stonewalling to allow his chief of staff to testify before members of Parliament, yes or no?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, election interference is an attack against each and every one of us. The reality right now is that the presidents of China and Russia are meeting in Moscow, which should be concerning to all of us considering what type of efforts are being made to undermine Canadian democracy.

What has been offered is for the people who received the briefings, the national campaign directors in 2019 and 2021, to appear. The Conservatives, I would suggest, should do the same. I would also suggest that it should be including Russia and other foreign actors that are attempting to interfere in our democracy instead of having such a partisan focus.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I say to bring it on.

Testifying about sexual misconduct in the military was no problem for Ms. Telford, as was testifying about the WE Charity scandal. There were no worries there, but testifying about what the PM knew about Beijing's interference in our elections is off limits. The PM's chief of staff has appeared at parliamentary committees on numerous occasions to answer questions. She ran the campaign. She is campaign staff. What is the difference this time?

What is the Prime Minister hiding, and why is the NDP letting him get away with it?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council and the Leader of the Opposition would have been provided, and were provided the opportunity for, a full briefing. He has declined it. In fact, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which would give an opportunity for the members opposite to be able to see every single document, is something that they are not willing to focus on or engage in.

We have offered this opportunity, and we have offered David Johnston, an independent, eminent Canadian, to look at this issue, so it begs this question: What is their interest? It would appear to me that their interest is partisan in nature and that they are using this opportunity to grind a partisan axe rather—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the official opposition brings one interest to this place, and that is the interest of Canadians to find out what the Prime Minister knew about foreign interference by the government in Beijing in our elections in 2019 and 2021.

However, the NDP, a party that twice voted to send Conservative staff to committee when we were in government, and that twice voted for Katie Telford to go to committee when their coalition partners were in government, are now unwilling or unable to send her this time. Is it a condition of the supply and confidence deal between these coalition partners that the NDP not send Katie Telford to committee?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell everyone what obstruction looks like. When I was the critic, and I was trying to deal

with the then Conservative government, Justice Iacobucci and Justice O'Connor critically called for the establishment of an independent oversight mechanism filled with parliamentarians that could look into every aspect of government.

What did the opposition leader do when he was minister of democratic reforms? He did nothing.

He did not take action on that. We did. This means that members of Parliament from every single party have the opportunity to look into every aspect of this matter. We have offered witnesses. We have had many ministers testify.

What is their interest? Partisan—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we have received is horrific partisanship from the government House leader and the Liberals. They appointed a family friend of the Prime Minister, a board member on the Beijing-funded Trudeau Foundation, to advise the Prime Minister on whether he maybe should, probably, might, could have a public inquiry.

We are looking for a public inquiry for Canadians, and we are looking for the Prime Minister's chief of staff to testify at committee.

Why will the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners not allow the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, to testify?

• (1440)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member across from me to be an honourable member. I am absolutely certain of his commitment to Canadian democracy. I hope that he would share the belief that every member in the House is equally committed to our Canadian democracy and equally offended at the idea of foreign interference interrupting it.

What concerns me is that we have provided mechanisms for every party to be able to look at every aspect of this. We provided an eminent Canadian who is going to look at this independently and provide recommendations. We have offered multiple ministers, multiple witnesses.

Their interest continues to be a partisan interest, not a factual interest. That is inappropriate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, by interfering in Canada's electoral system, Beijing's Communist Party is subverting our democracy. As parliamentarians, all of us should be seized with this unacceptable affront.

*Oral Questions*

There is someone in Canada who knows full well what may have happened. She was in charge of the current Prime Minister's election campaign and is currently the Prime Minister's chief of staff. We want to hear from her in committee. We know that the government does not want her to testify.

My question is for one member of the government coalition, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. Will he rise in the House and tell his constituents that he will vote in favour of complete freedom and, above all, full transparency in this matter and allow Ms. Telford to appear before the committee?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we share our colleague's interest in the importance of strengthening democracy. To use his own words, we do not want anyone subverting Canadian democracy. As I said, that is why we, as a government, put in place measures that did not exist before 2015, when his friends were in power.

We also asked the Right Hon. David Johnston to look at all the measures currently in place and to make recommendations that will be made public about what more we can do to reassure Canadians that essential measures are in place.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is a seasoned parliamentarian and an honourable man.

What does he have to say about the fact that his government members talked non-stop, while saying nothing at all, for over 20 hours to prevent democracy from working?

The minister is a strong supporter of full and complete democracy, especially parliamentary democracy. The chief of staff, Ms. Telford, knows things that Canadians want to know about what happened with the regime in Beijing. Will the minister allow her to testify in parliamentary committee, yes or no?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that our government has been aware of the importance of strengthening our democracy and democratic institutions from the very beginning.

He also knows full well that ministers are always available to give proper testimony before parliamentary committees. My hon. colleague may not have been here last week, but I am sure he watched the Minister of Foreign Affairs' extraordinary testimony in committee.

He knows very well that we will always be there to answer our colleagues' questions.

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, China's interference is the greatest threat to democracy and national security. That was the blunt statement made by CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, last Friday.

The government's response should, at the very least, be on par with CSIS' fears, yet appointing a special rapporteur without a mandate or timeline does not rise to that level. At best, this is a case of wasting time until the special rapporteur comes to the only appropriate answer. At the end of the day, there is only one answer, one

transparent and non-partisan solution, for combatting foreign interference.

Will the government finally launch a transparent and independent public inquiry?

[*English*]

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we agree that foreign interference should never be a partisan issue. That is why we appointed someone who is independent, has an impeccable background and will be able to review everything available when it comes to foreign interference in our elections and make recommendations.

We value that independence. We know that David Johnston will be an outstanding individual to carry out this work and make recommendations to the government, which may include a public inquiry. Whatever the recommendations are, we will accept them.

• (1445)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if they want to know what independence looks like, they should be asking us.

It would be easy to criticize Mr. Johnston's appointment as special rapporteur, but that would be letting the government off easy over its most significant ethical failure. CSIS is saying this is the greatest threat to national security, yet the government is choosing to cover it up. Seemingly unaware that foreign interference is spreading, it is choosing to buy time.

To put it bluntly, there are only two possible conclusions to the special rapporteur's review. The first is to sweep the whole business under the rug, and the second is to propose an independent public inquiry, which is what everyone is asking for.

Why not cut to the chase, be ethical for once and launch the inevitable inquiry?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc is obviously trying to make us believe that it is serious about protecting our institutions, but let us take a look at its record.

When measures were put in place to protect our elections, the Bloc voted against them. When we took steps to prevent foreign money from influencing our elections, the Bloc voted against them. When it came to strengthening the integrity of our voter lists, the Bloc voted against that too.

We take the job of protecting our democratic institutions very seriously. We will continue to do whatever it takes to strengthen and protect them, and we would appreciate the Bloc's help, for once.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is the wrong person and the wrong job. Irrespective of Mr. Johnston, the Prime Minister is the one who came up with the idea of a special rapporteur, which is the wrong job.

*Oral Questions*

The Prime Minister is the one holding up the investigation into the Chinese police stations. He is the one holding up the investigation into the intimidation of the Chinese community. He is the one holding up the study into potentially illegal election financing. He is the one sowing doubt about our democracy.

The Prime Minister is the only person standing in the way of an independent public commission of inquiry. When will he get out of the way?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government has brought in important measures to counter foreign interference.

My colleague claims that the Prime Minister was not there to strengthen democratic institutions. She knows that we are the first government to form a committee of parliamentarians to monitor our national security institutions. We have brought in other measures that will enhance electoral transparency.

The Right Hon. David Johnston will continue this important work.

[*English*]

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the motion in front of the House today orders the Prime Minister's chief of staff to testify about Beijing's foreign interference in front of committee.

It is clear the government will be voting against the motion, but the government and its party cannot carry the House alone. It is not clear whether its confidence and supply partner, the NDP, will be voting for or against the motion.

The public has a right to know before the vote. Could the government tell us if its confidence-and-supply partner will be voting for or against the motion?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that David Johnston was appointed by Stephen Harper as governor general. The Conservatives had confidence in him to be the governor general of this country. He is the individual who is charged, as an eminent Canadian, to oversee this entire process. The Conservatives are now calling that individual into question.

However, the idea that Mr. Johnston would not be committed to Canadian democracy and not look at every corner of this issue with the interest of Canadian democracy at heart is offensive.

In addition, the opposition knows through NSICOP that its members have the opportunity to see any and all information in committee. Unfortunately, they voted against creating that process.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, three times, the Liberals and their NDP coalition partner blocked the Prime Minister's chief of staff from testifying about Beijing's election interference. Now, at the direction of the Prime Minister, Liberal MPs have been filibustering my straightforward motion for Telford to appear for nearly 24 hours.

Why have the Liberals gone to such lengths to shield Telford? What does she know that the Prime Minister wants hidden from Canadians?

• (1450)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, individuals who received briefings and would have had knowledge of the 2019 and 2021 campaigns as national campaign directors have offered to testify at committee. The ministers who were responsible have testified before committees. Other witnesses and experts are testifying before committee.

Why is the Conservative Party so solely and singularly focused on Katie Telford? I will tell the House why. It is a partisan interest, and it is deeply disturbing. The interest of Conservative members here is to wedge, divide and create a partisan advantage.

I would suggest that, when we are dealing with something as serious as foreign interference, our focus should be on protecting our democracy, not partisan advantage.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff is a critical witness to get to the heart of the scandal in terms of what the Prime Minister knows, when he knew about it and why he failed to respond to Beijing's election interference.

If, instead of doing the bidding of the corrupt Prime Minister, the NDP do an about-face to finally stand up for democracy, and the motion passes, will the Prime Minister respect the will of the House or double down on his obstruction and his cover-up?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I noticed that you did not get on your feet, but I will. Calling a member of this House "corrupt" is despicable. Calling a member of this Parliament "corrupt" is something I find absolutely reprehensible—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order.

I will let the hon. government House leader start from the top, please.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I heard some yelling across the way. I am flawed. I have made many errors in my life, as I am sure many members of this House have. In all my time in opposition or government, I have never called another person in this place "corrupt". I have never stood in my place and levelled an allegation without information; the members opposite do not have that information.

They take rumour and conjecture and try to trump it up for partisan advantage, and they overreach with terms like "corrupt" about an individual and a Prime Minister who has dedicated his life to public service and making this country better. This place deserves better than that kind of debate.

*Oral Questions*

We are dealing with the serious issue of foreign interference. It deserves serious responses.

**The Speaker:** I would remind the hon. members to use their words judiciously in the House and use parliamentary language, which is language that does not offend someone personally.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in Alberta, toxic water with poisonous levels of arsenic, dissolved metals and hydrocarbons leaked from tailings ponds into Treaty No. 8 land and water for nine months. Neither the provincial nor the federal government bothered to inform the people who live there. The Liberal government says it cares about the environment and indigenous people, but it blocked tailings ponds' oversight in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Like all Albertans, I am horrified and outraged. How can Canadians trust the government to protect our water and prevent this from ever happening again?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that neither indigenous nations nor the federal government were told about the seepage or leak before February. For nine months, the federal government did not know about this. We have since sent out enforcement officers to do monitoring.

Many of my colleagues and I are working with the communities to provide them with what they need. This includes having drinkable water sent to them if they wish as testing of the water in their communities is still ongoing.

We are working on this. We will continue to work on it with the indigenous nations and the Alberta government.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Joe Biden is coming to town. It is going to be a great opportunity for him to school the Prime Minister on how he can move from saying nice words on the climate crisis to actually getting something done. Biden has put out an unprecedented \$370 billion to ensure the United States is a leader in the clean energy economy.

Now we know the Conservatives do not believe in clean energy, but when I have been meeting with Alberta workers, they have asked about what the government is going to do. I have a simple question: How much money is the Prime Minister going to put in this budget for clean energy to make sure that Canadian workers are not left behind?

• (1455)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we welcome President Biden's visit to Canada in the coming days to talk about these important issues, about the clean economy, about fighting climate change. I would like, however, to remind my hon. colleague that we are already investing in Canada, \$120 billion, not coming but happening now, which is, per capita, three times more than what the U.S. is doing.

We have a price on pollution in Canada. Unfortunately, our U.S. friends cannot have a price on pollution. We are doing a number of things in Canada that the Americans are telling us they only wish they could be doing. We will be happy to work with President Biden and the U.S. on these.

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**HOUSING**

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that there have been significant roadblocks to building housing supply at the municipal level. The system simply is not working. That is why I was pleased to join with the Prime Minister and Minister of Housing to announce further federal leadership to help get more homes approved and built through the new housing accelerator fund.

Could the minister please tell the House about the details of this new program and what it means for Canadians?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, I was pleased to join the hon. member, together with the Prime Minister, to announce the launch of the housing accelerator fund, a \$4-billion initiative that is meant to eradicate the roadblocks and get more housing built faster for Canadians. This will create 100,000 new units, as well as create a permanent systems change that will ensure municipalities approve more housing for Canadians.

This is just one part of our government's national housing strategy, and we will not rest until every Canadian has access to a safe and affordable place to call home.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister's high-spending government, it has little choice left but to raise taxes on hard-working Canadians. That is right. If Canadians want to numb the pain of higher inflation and a slowing economy with their favourite beer, spirit or wine, they have to dig deeper into their pockets. The excise tax on alcohol is going up over 6.3%, costing consumers and businesses over \$125 million next year.

Will the Liberal government stop hosing Canadians and stop its automatic increases to the escalator tax on alcohol this year?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, let me begin by thanking all members of the House and Canadians for sending in their condolences and support to Edmontonians and to people as we grieve the loss of Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan, constables with the Edmonton Police Service. Our community is grieving and Canadians are with us. We will remember them.

On the substantive issue that my colleague raises, we have an escalator tax in place on beer. We have lowered low-alcohol beer. What he is saying is not entirely accurate. The increase this year will be one cent per can of beer. We understand that. We are going to continue to monitor the situation.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, he is now imposing the biggest tax increase ever on April 1 on beer, wine, cider and spirits, a crushing 6.3% tax increase. These cost increases will trickle down to restaurants, retailers and, ultimately, Canadian consumers. In itself, it will continue to perpetuate increasing inflation.

Will the Prime Minister cancel this April 1 tax increase on Canadians?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was clear in my previous answer, but let us go a step further. It is disingenuous for the Conservative members to stand up and talk about giving breaks to small business when every single member on that side voted against tax breaks for small businesses. It is rank hypocrisy.

It is one cent per beer. We are watching the inflation escalator for beer. We understand what wine, beer and spirits do for our economy, but the Conservatives cannot have their cake and eat it too.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have four micro-breweries, a distillery and a number of bars and restaurants in my riding. Each of them has condemned the excise tax increase on their products.

Since the government came into power eight years ago, life has never been so hard for people across the country. Now the government is doubling down to yet again fill its coffers on the backs of Canadians and Quebecers.

Despite his thirst for inflation, will the Prime Minister do the right thing and cut the excise tax increase from his next budget?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Tourism, I understand full well the important contribution of spirits, alcohol and wine to our community.

With inflation and the excise tax, a can of beer will cost one cent more. This will ensure our tax system is equitable and responsible for all Canadians. We will do the right thing, and we will continue to help Canadians with affordability.

• (1500)

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has

been in power for eight years, and life has never been more difficult for Canadians. In my riding, many people have to rely on food banks to eat.

What has the government been doing all these years? It has been driving up the cost of living every year. Rents have doubled, the cost of groceries has increased by 30% and inflation is at its highest level in 40 years.

When will the government finally work for Canadians and freeze tax hikes?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that since this government took office in 2015, we have reduced poverty in Canada. We have lifted 2.7 million Canadians out of poverty since taking over from the previous Conservative government. We have lifted 782,000 children and 178,000 seniors out of poverty thanks to our programs.

We continue to be there for people. One example is the \$500 supplement we are providing to Canadians struggling to pay their rent. What the Conservatives need to explain to Canadians is why they always vote against helping those who need it most.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are 11 days left. In 11 days, Quebec will no longer be able to submit our municipalities' green infrastructure and public transit projects, because Ottawa unilaterally decided to bring the deadline forward by two years. Quebec has 11 days before Ottawa pockets \$2.3 billion of Quebecers' money that was supposed to be for Quebec cities. Quebec has 11 days before Ottawa forces it to say goodbye to \$2.3 billion that was supposed to be used for projects to limit shoreline erosion or to build cultural centres or water treatment plants.

Rather than threatening our cities, could the government not simply extend the deadline?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. It gives me an opportunity to remind him of how well we work with the Government of Quebec on infrastructure issues. I have had extremely constructive discussions with Minister Julien on many occasions. I am sure that, by March 31, we will come to an agreement with the Government of Quebec on an important list of infrastructure projects like the ones my colleague talked about.

*Oral Questions*

Rather than always trying to pick fights, as the Minister of Canadian Heritage likes to say, we are trying to work with Quebec, and that is exactly what we are doing.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they keep their word and work hard with Quebec, but once agreements have been signed, they do not respect them. They have some nerve. The government is threatening to deny our cities \$2.3 billion for things like public transit projects, yet it keeps neglecting projects like Trans Mountain, which has just reached new heights with a bill for \$30 billion.

The government is giving our cities an ultimatum: They have 11 days before their funding is cut. For dirty oil companies, however, there is no ultimatum or cap. The sky is the limit. The oil companies get preferential treatment while our cities get unfair treatment.

Why not assure our mayors that they will get their money?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we will not deny the municipalities of Quebec or the Government of Quebec federal funding for projects as important as the public transit projects my colleague talked about.

For example, look at the blue line in Montreal or the tramway in Quebec City. These are essential projects that I address in my discussions with the mayor of Quebec City and the mayor of Longueuil.

We have always said that we would be there with the Government of Quebec to support important projects for the economic and environmental future of Quebec and Canada. I am confident that we will conclude this important agreement in the next few days.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CARBON PRICING**

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians can hardly afford to eat, drive or heat their homes. Anne from Thorhild told me her gas bill was over \$1,000, and a quarter of that was carbon tax. She said, “Last winter, with the horrid cold snap, I still didn’t have bills this high.” She said, “the carbon tax is brutal.”

The carbon tax has hiked the cost of everything, and the Liberals are just going to make it worse. Therefore, when will they take responsibility for the pain they have caused and axe the tax or get out of the way, so Conservatives can fix what they broke?

• (1505)

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House many times, affordability is obviously a critically important issue for all members of the House. This government has put in place a range of measures to address affordability concerns, including the fact that the price on pollution actually results in eight out of 10 families getting more money back than they pay. It is an affordability measure in and of itself.

However, climate change is real, whether my colleagues across the aisle admit it or not. It is something we must address for the future of our children. We must do so in a manner that will build good jobs and economic opportunities in every province and territory, and that is exactly what we are doing.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadians can no longer afford to eat, heat or house themselves. When the Liberals triple the carbon tax, the folks I know, having to choose between heating and eating, seniors like Sheila, Neil and Marshall, worry that surviving the next carbon increase on April 1 will be impossible for them to manage. Seniors are currently forced to use their overdrafts to cover their expenses.

When will the Prime Minister exercise compassion and clear the path so the Conservatives can fix this disaster the Liberals have created?

**Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the last seven and a half years, we have been there supporting seniors and Canadians every single step of the way. You do not have to take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative member herself was highlighting in committee how poverty rates for seniors had dramatically decreased since we took office, and she is right. It is because, unlike them, we decided to invest in them by ensuring we are investing and increasing their guaranteed income supplement and by increasing their old security pension for them.

Unlike the Conservatives, we are going to continue to make sure Canadians, including seniors, are supported now and into the future.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Canadian farmers have clearly had enough of the Liberal Prime Minister. In a recent survey, they were asked how many felt the Liberals were doing a good job supporting Canadian agriculture. How many Canadian farmers said yes? Two per cent. I wonder why. Maybe it is the punishing carbon tax that is going up yet again on April 1.

According to the Canadian food price index, when the Liberal-NDP coalition triples the carbon tax, an average Canadian farm will pay \$150,000 a year in carbon taxes alone.

Why is the Prime Minister so determined to tax Canadian farm families into the ground?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government has given farmers more support than any other government.

When the Conservatives were in power, they made cuts to risk management programs and slashed investment in research and innovation. We need research and innovation to be able to improve yields and reduce emissions, while also increasing production. The world relies on Canada to ensure food security. We had the largest budget in Canadian history, at \$4 billion.

We are here for farmers.

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### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the French language is one of our country's treasures. It is the key to understanding the rich and diverse communities found throughout the world and here in Canada.

French is spoken from Whitehorse to Laval, from Gaspé to Isle Madame, off Cape Breton in Nova Scotia.

Could the Minister of Official Languages tell the House about the measures our government is taking to protect French across the country?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Laval—Les Îles for his important question and his hard work.

Our French language is invaluable, and it is at risk.

That is why we are the first government to recognize the decline of the French language and also the first government to say that we will do everything we can to protect and promote French across the country.

With Bill C-13 and our next action plan for official languages, we will contribute our fair share to the all-out effort to protect and promote French across the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy International Day of La Francophonie.

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[English]

### JUSTICE

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, violent repeat offenders continue to get bail and are released into our communities.

In Ajax, Ontario, a soccer star was stabbed to death, and his alleged murderer has been released on bail. This suspect was previously arrested and charged with violent crimes just one month before stabbing this soccer player.

Canada has become a place where violent repeat offenders charged with second degree murder are getting out on bail into our communities. When will the Prime Minister take responsibility for this reckless bail system so we can fix what he broke?

### Oral Questions

• (1510)

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to be and feel safe. We all have a role to play in protecting communities. The laws on bail are clear. If an accused poses a risk to public safety, he or she should be denied bail.

Federal, provincial and territorial leaders met last week, including with the Minister of Justice, on the issue of bail and have come forward with a communiqué. We hope to continue to work with our provincial and territorial partners in order to ensure our communities are safe.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there it is. The government's solution is just more meetings, more talk and no action. Meanwhile, Canadians are being murdered.

The Liberals have had eight years to take action and they have only made it worse. We have seen a 32% rise in violent crimes under their watch, a doubling of gang murders, and headline after headline of violent repeat offenders getting out on bail only to hurt more innocent Canadians.

Our bail system is broken. How can Canadians possibly trust that the Liberal government is going to fix it when it is the one that broke it?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the ministers of justice from the provinces as well as the federal government got together and brought forward some very important ideas on reforming the bail system. It is very clear that our communities need to be safe. There is a right to bail enshrined in our Constitution. The ministers of justice came together with a program that will allow us to ensure that our communities remain safe, while at the same time ensuring the right to bail.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, violent tragic events have cost the lives of several Quebecers. This is all part of a larger pattern. In fact, since the Prime Minister has been in power, crime has increased by 32%. Our streets are becoming more unsafe all the time, yet the government is reducing sentences and allowing criminals to serve their sentence at home.

When will the government take the situation seriously, protect victims and impose harsh sentences for violent crimes?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is the Conservative Party that is getting in our way when it comes to our country's national security.

### Oral Questions

We introduced a bill to improve security across the country. The Conservatives have already made it clear that they want nothing to do with it. There have already been several murders this year, including one in Montreal last night. We need to tighten gun control across the country.

I hope the Conservatives will help us.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, climate science must be at the heart of our decision-making process to fight climate change. The latest UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scientific report adds to our global knowledge and understanding, and shows the indisputable fact that humanity continues to warm our planet to dangerous levels. The science is clear that only urgent and sustained emissions reductions will limit the warming of our planet.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change inform the House on Canada's progress on achieving our net-zero targets?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy on this very important issue.

Yes, today, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued another stark warning. We collectively need to act to fight climate change, something the official opposition does not seem to have understood over the last 30 years. It wants to make pollution free again in Canada. It has no idea whatsoever what needs to be done to fight climate change and to adapt to the reality of climate change.

In 2021 alone, there was \$17 billion in climate impacts to Canadians. That is what climate change means to Canada.

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### HEALTH

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, caregivers are at a breaking point as the Liberal government fails to solve the health care crisis. This is putting increased pressure on families to care for their loved ones.

The important job of caring for parents, grandparents and children is most often left up to women, and this work is unpaid. The government can support caregivers by immediately making the Canada caregiver credit a refundable tax benefit to put money back into the pockets of people.

Why is the government delaying this benefit for those who care for their loved ones?

• (1515)

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are obviously very mindful of the incredible challenges that patients and workers face in these very difficult times. That is why, just six weeks ago, the Prime Minister announced a historic investment of almost \$200 billion in addition to the current level of the CHT, in addition to the value of the tax points. Those dollars obvi-

ously matter very much, but more importantly, they matter because they are going to lead to significant positive outcomes for workers and patients in the years to come.

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### TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, public transit is in crisis. Municipalities like mine are being forced to raise fares while in some cases simultaneously cutting service due to a lack of investment from higher orders of government. Groups across the country, from Environmental Defence to the Canadian Urban Transit Association, are sounding the alarm, warning that transit systems are at risk of falling into a death spiral without critical operational support.

Will the minister ensure not only capital funding in budget 2023, but also the critical operating support being called for across the country?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member will acknowledge that our government has made multi-billion dollar investments in improving Canada's public transit infrastructure in large municipalities and in small rural communities as well. The member correctly identifies that, during the acute months of COVID, our government stepped up, in partnership with provinces, to support municipalities to operate transit systems that were critical for essential workers to be able to serve people during COVID. We will continue to work with municipalities and partners to ensure that Canada has the best transit system in the world.

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[Translation]

### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Nathalie Roy, President of the Quebec National Assembly.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

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### TRAGEDY IN AMQUI

**The Speaker:** Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to acknowledge the tragic event that occurred in Amqui, Quebec.

[English]

I now invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]



**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In reviewing Hansard from June 6, 2006, I wanted to draw to the government House leader's attention, and I believe he would like the opportunity to respond, comments that he made alleging that corruption and fraud had been committed by another member.

I am looking to see, based on his comments made in question period today, in response to the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, if he would like to withdraw his assertion and perhaps offer an apology.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I will read from Hansard on the date in question, June 6, 2006. It says, “Mr. Speaker, there have been allegations of both fraud and corruption and the question is very simple.”

By the way, that question was with respect to the Conservative Party and the in-and-out scandal. It was not with respect to any member in the House. I stand by my comment that no member of Parliament should call any other member of Parliament corrupt.

It is inappropriate and should not have occurred.

• (1520)

**The Speaker:** I just want to remind the hon. members not to call each other names. It is a very simple principle. Do not call another member a name, regardless of which side one is sitting on, or accuse them of something that is, well, calling them a name.

I will leave it at that and I am sure that both sides will learn from today's experience.

The member for Avalon is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Ken McDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened now, for weeks on end in question period, to members getting up and referring to a government that has been in power for eight years. This government will not have been in power for eight years until October 19.

I would like that to be corrected.

**The Speaker:** I am afraid that the Speaker does not have the power to regulate either the questions being asked or the answers being given. That is up to the hon. members to do.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official language, the government's responses to 39 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian

### Routine Proceedings

NATO Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation at the bureau and standing committee meetings in Athens, Greece, from April 9 to 10, 2022, and the spring session in Vilnius, Lithuania, from May 25 to 30, 2022.

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## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, in relation to Bill S-222, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a report from the Standing Committee on International Trade, on which we have spent many hours in discussion and looking at opportunities for improvements in the system.

It is my honour to present, in both official languages, as required, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, entitled “The ArriveCAN Digital tool: Impacts on Certain Canadian Sectors”.

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

### LIAISON

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a report on the committee activities and expenditures, from April 1, 2022 to December 1, 2022, of the committees of the House of Commons.

I will present it, in both official languages, as required. This is the fifth report of the Liaison Committee. This report highlights the work and accomplishments of each committee of the House and details the budgets that fund the activities approved by committee members.

[Translation]

### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish everyone a happy International Day of La Francophonie.

*Routine Proceedings*

Today I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following four reports from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: the 26th report entitled “Report on the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Nova Scotia 2022”; the 27th report entitled “Report on the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of New Brunswick 2022”; the 28th report entitled “Report on the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan 2022”; and the 29th report entitled “Report on the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Manitoba 2022”.

I hope the members of that committee will find a solution so that we can begin the reports on Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario.

• (1525)

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to table three dissenting opinions in respect of the main reports of the committee regarding the reports of the federal electoral boundaries commissions for the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each member who appeared before the committee to testify with respect to their notices of objection, as well as to thank the clerks and analysts for their work and their support for the committee.

We support and respect the work of the commissions and therefore broadly support the findings of the reports of each of the commissions. However, we do concur with the main reports of the committee with respect to the notices of objection of the members for Regina—Lewvan, Regina—Qu'Appelle, Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 30th report later this day.

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**STRENGTHENING AIR PASSENGER PROTECTION ACT**

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-327, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (air passenger protection).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise this afternoon to table the strengthening air passenger protections act. This bill comes on the heels of two seasons of air travel chaos that left air passengers sleeping on airport floors, missing important family trips and out thousands of dollars.

My bill would do four key things. First of all, it would close a loophole in the Canada Transportation Act that airlines have been using to deny passengers the compensation they are due. It would

make compensation automatic. It would shift the burden of proof off passengers and squarely onto the airlines themselves. Finally, it would increase the financial penalties for non-compliance.

Most importantly, this bill would bring Canada's air passenger protection regime up to the standards set by the European Union, finally and for all time moving forward.

I will end by thanking the organizations Air Passenger Rights, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Option Consommateurs, whose hard work helped immeasurably in crafting this bill.

The government does not have to wait to debate my bill. It could take the ideas contained within and table a government bill. I hope it does that at the earliest opportunity.

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

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**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

• (1530)

[*English*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

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**PETITIONS**

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Canadians concerned about a report from Safeguard Defenders that the government in Beijing is operating three police stations in Toronto. These police stations threaten public safety, violate international law and undermine our sovereignty.

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Public Safety to direct the RCMP and CSIS to investigate these operations, protect Canadian sovereignty and shut down any operations found to be contrary to Canadian and international law.

*Routine Proceedings*

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition, and I have presented a very similar petition about 10 times in the House, from constituents calling upon the government to take action to shut down TC Energy's proposed pumped storage project on the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre base in Meaford due to the negative impacts it will have on the environment, the economy and more.

## OPIOIDS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this is also not the first time I have presented a similar petition. The constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands remain devastated by the deaths from the opioid crisis, both near our home and across Canada.

The opioid crisis in Canada is a poisoning crisis. It has not yet been declared, but the petitioners call on us to declare it a public health emergency based on the number of deaths in Canada due to the poisoned drug supply and the illegal drug supply. The petitioners call for us to recognize it as a health issue and not a criminal issue.

They call on us to act on the recommendations made by social workers, frontline workers, nurses, doctors, and organizations like Moms Stop The Harm, and decriminalize drugs in Canada.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand and present e-petition 4217, signed by 1,393 signatories.

They are calling on the government and the House of Commons to conduct and publicize a comprehensive study on the financial, climate, environmental and social costs and risks of the F-35 fighter jets. They want to make public the findings for the gender-based analysis, the environmental assessment, climate impacts, and the impacts on indigenous communities of this new fleet. They are asking that the Government of Canada invest in climate change and the well-being of Canadians, instead of this massive purchase.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1148 to 1150, 1152, 1169 to 1171, 1179, 1184, 1188 and 1189.

[Text]

Question No. 1148—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC): (a) what is the process for a case manager or Veterans Service Agent (VSA) to approve a veteran or a veteran's family member to receive services from a service provider; (b) how are case managers and VSAs made aware of service providers; and (c) what is the process for evaluating service providers, and (i) by whom, and (ii) how often, are service providers evaluated?

**The Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to part (a) of the question, a veterans service agent's screening of unmet needs and a case manager's assessment of a veteran's overall well-being identify needs. Veterans may access treat-

ment benefits based on their needs and corresponding coverage entitlement linked to a disability condition recognized by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Under the treatment benefits program, Veterans Affairs Canada covers the cost of mental health services for family members when the mental health professional who is treating the veteran indicates these services will have a positive impact on the veteran's mental health. For participants in the rehabilitation program, Veterans Affairs Canada covers the cost for family members who need mental health services when the assessing or treating professional identifies that these services will help meet the participant's rehabilitation goals and they are not available through other programs.

Veterans Affairs Canada also provides support for a range of mental health services available to family members through the Veterans Affairs Canada assistance service program. Veterans, former Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and their families and caregivers can access mental health services at no cost, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by calling 1-800-268-7708.

With respect to part (b) of the question, case managers and veterans service agents access the Medavie Blue Cross portal to verify registered providers in the veteran's area. They then discuss them with their clients, who can choose their providers of choice.

With respect to part (c) of the question, Veterans Affairs Canada's claims processor, Medavie Blue Cross, manages a comprehensive network of service providers across Canada to provide services to veterans who are clients of Veterans Affairs Canada and are regionally dispersed, through the federal health claims processing services contract.

Service provider eligibility criteria for individual health care practitioners and firms are implemented on the provider registration system and maintained by Medavie Blue Cross provider relations to ensure consistency and efficiency, as well as to validate that service providers' eligibility remains current. Service providers' credentials are reviewed when they initially register and then again if they have a change to their address or want to obtain an additional provider identification. Medavie Blue Cross develops an annual plan to outline and support the development and execution of service provider relations' activities for the period of the plan.

*Routine Proceedings*

General objectives of service provider relations related to service provider evaluation include maintaining a rigorous re-credentialing and re-registration monitoring program; maintaining, supporting and renegotiating service provider agreements and memorandums of understanding; maintaining current approved service provider criteria and associations based on the requirements of partners, namely Veterans Affairs Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Armed Forces; and conducting annual service provider inactivation to ensure that the service provider registry remains current.

Since April 2022, Veterans Affairs Canada and Medavie Blue Cross have implemented a new service provider escalation process to address concerns related to service provider quality of service and billing issues. Joint biweekly meetings are held between Veterans Affairs Canada and Medavie Blue Cross to investigate and address concerns. Resolutions include service provider education, follow-up with the regulatory body and/or deactivation as a Veterans Affairs Canada service provider.

**Question No. 1149—Mr. Dan Muys:**

With regard to the statement made by the Prime Minister on November 30, 2022, that 93.5 percent of Canadians have access to reliable high-speed Internet services: what percentage of Canadians living in the Hamilton metropolitan census area have access to at least 50 Mbps download speed as of December 2022?

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada knows that access to high-speed Internet is essential for all Canadians, no matter where they live. That is why the government has made more than \$7.6 billion available across government connectivity programs to support the building of rural and remote Internet infrastructure.

The Government of Canada's most recent connectivity program, the universal broadband fund, or UBF, is the largest federal investment in broadband in Canada's history. The UBF is providing \$3.225 billion to help ensure that 98% of Canadians will have access to high-speed Internet by 2026 and all Canadians by 2030. The government is on track to meeting that goal. Today, 93.5% of Canadians have access to high-speed Internet or are targeted to receive access through program commitments, compared to 79% of Canadians in 2014.

With regard to the Hamilton metropolitan census area, 97.6% of dwellings currently have access to a service of 50/10 Mbps or higher.

On July 29, 2021, a federal-provincial co-funding agreement with Ontario was announced to bring high-speed Internet to nearly 280,000 rural Ontario households in hundreds of communities across the province. This agreement is being made possible by an equal federal-provincial investment totalling more than \$1.2 billion. Projects under this agreement have already begun to be announced and can be viewed on the UBF's selected projects page.

The Government of Ontario announced selected projects and communities from its reverse auction, which will connect another 266,000 underserved households in the province. The Government of Canada has worked closely with the Government of Ontario to ensure recent funding decisions are coordinated with decisions on the reverse auction.

The Government of Canada looks forward to making more core UBF announcements under the Canada-Ontario broadband partnership in the coming months.

**Question No. 1150—Mr. Dan Muys:**

With regard to the Statistics Canada release entitled "Access to the Internet in Canada, 2020" which stated that only 76 percent of respondents living in a census metropolitan area, and only 48 percent of respondents not living in a census metropolitan area, had an advertised speed of 50 Mbps or more: what percentage of Canadians living (i) inside, (ii) outside, of a census metropolitan area have access to at least 50 Mbps download speed as of December 2022?

**The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to parts (i) and (ii), according to data from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, in 2021, 99.2% of those living in urban areas had access to 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload Internet speeds, compared to 62% of those living in rural areas. This represents an increase for rural areas compared to 2019, when 45.6% had access to Internet speeds of 50/10. Rural areas are defined as areas with a population of less than 1,000 or a density of 400 or fewer people per square kilometre.

Note that the estimates provided from the 2020 Canadian Internet use survey represent the percentage of Canadians who knew their advertised connection speed and subscribed to a speed tier of 50 Mbps or higher. If they chose not to subscribe to a speed tier of 50 Mbps or higher, they were not included in this estimate, even if the service was available to them. Comparable data for 2022 will be available from the 2022 Canadian Internet use survey currently being collected. It will be released in July 2023.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1152—Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to Canadian sourced income and the definition of "permanent establishment": (a) why is working from home in Canada while logging into US-based companies' internet servers interpreted or considered as Canadian-sourced income by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); (b) is the CRA considering a commuter's home as a US company's permanent establishment or as the commuter's permanent establishment; (c) since the commuter's home is not US company property by any measurement, why does the CRA consider the commuter's home as a US company's permanent establishment or as the commuter's permanent establishment of work and in turn how does neither case imply that the commuter and his home are therefore a small business entity generating Canadian-sourced income with deductible expenses; (d) if a commuter's home is considered a commuter's permanent establishment and the commuter is not employed by a Canadian company but provides services to a foreign company, why is the commuter not considered its own small business entity for Canadian tax purposes and not qualified for small business tax deductions; (e) if the commuter's home is considered as a permanent establishment, why are commuter business expenses such as utilities, travel, rent, vehicle used and registration, etc. not allowed to be deducted as business expenses from their Canadian-sourced income; and (f) if a commuter's home is considered a permanent establishment, why is going to another office from the commuter's home permanent establishment not considered as a business travel expense?

**The Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, and represents its general interpretation of the relevant provisions of the Income Tax Act and of the Canada-U.S. tax treaty. This may not be determinative of the tax treatment of a specific taxpayer's situation.

With respect to part (a), the CRA is interpreting the question to mean employment income of an individual resident in Canada, and such employment income is earned, or sourced, where the related duties are actually performed. This is consistent with the situation where a non-resident of Canada travels to Canada and works here, even on a temporary basis. In either case, the employment income could be considered sourced in Canada if the duties of employment are performed here.

The Canadian resident employee will be earning employment income in Canada, and therefore the U.S. company faces Canadian payroll withholding requirements even if it does not have a permanent establishment in Canada. The employee may be able to obtain a letter of authority from the CRA to authorize the U.S. employer to reduce the Canadian deductions at source to take into account the anticipated foreign tax credit. To get a letter of authority, the employee has to send form T1213, the request to reduce tax deductions at source, or a written request to the Sudbury tax centre.

With respect to part (b), a non-resident employer is subject to Canadian income tax and has to file a tax return if, at any time in the year, the non-resident employer carries on business in Canada. Generally, Canada's tax treaties provide that only business profits attributable to a Canadian permanent establishment will be subject to Canadian income tax.

A permanent establishment of a non-resident corporation is defined under the Canada-U.S. tax treaty to include "a fixed place of business through which the business of a resident of a Contracting State is wholly or partly carried on". In this case, it is the U.S. In making a determination of whether or not the home of a commuter constitutes a permanent establishment of the U.S. corporate employer, the factors outlined in the commentary on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, Model Tax

Convention on Income and on Capital, or OECD commentary, and derived from jurisprudence are to be taken into account.

If the home office is not at the disposal of the non-resident employer and if the employee is not required by the employer to work at the home office, the use of such home office to carry out employment duties, in and of itself, would generally not constitute a permanent establishment of the U.S. corporate employer in Canada. As indicated in the OECD commentary, the use of a home office does not typically mean that it is at the disposal of the non-resident employer.

In the interest of completeness, it should be pointed out that a corporation resident in the U.S. may also have a permanent establishment in Canada as a result of certain activities carried out by its employees, irrespective of whether these activities are carried out at a home office or elsewhere in Canada.

With respect to part (c), the following responses were prepared on the assumption that the Canadian resident is an employee of the U.S. company. The answer to part (b) includes general comments on permanent establishment determinations for the non-resident employer.

If the Canadian resident is self-employed, the business income arising from the activity would still be sourced and taxed in the country where the services are actually performed. The existence of a permanent establishment of the commuter in Canada would only be relevant to the extent that the commuter does not reside in Canada and carries on its own business rather than being an employee of the U.S. company.

To determine whether a person is an employee or a self-employed individual, the key question to ask is whether the person is engaged to carry out services as a person in business on their own account or as an employee. The element of control by the employer and the facts of the working relationship as a whole decide the employment status. If the commuter is self-employed, expenses incurred to generate the income would generally be deductible, subject to the general limitations provided by the Income Tax Act.

With respect to part (d), the small business deduction applies only to Canadian-controlled private corporations that carry on business primarily in Canada.

With respect to part (e), please see the response to parts (b) and (c) for the discussion on whether the commuter's home is considered a permanent establishment of the U.S. corporation or not.

*Routine Proceedings*

Assuming that the Canadian resident is only working as an employee of the U.S. company, limited home office expenses are deductible by the employee if the employee is required by the employer to incur such expenses. If there is an office available for the employee in the U.S. but the employee chooses to avoid commuting time, the employer may not be able to certify that the home office is a work requirement. If the Canadian resident provides services to the U.S. company as a self-employed individual and the Canadian resident's principal office is at his or her home, the expenses likely would be deductible, subject to the general limitations provided by the Income Tax Act.

With respect to part (f), whether the commuter's home is considered a permanent establishment of the U.S. corporation is defined in the answers to parts (b) and (c). Assuming that it is an employment relationship, travel from the employee's home to the office is generally considered personal in nature.

Question No. 1169—**Mr. Luc Berthold:**

With regard to reports that in 2020 or 2021, officials at Employment and Social Development Canada (EDSC) were instructed to answer in the affirmative whenever individuals enquired about whether or not they were eligible to receive Employment Insurance benefits: (a) on what date were directives or instructions on eligibility given; (b) what is the summary of each directive or instruction given; (c) who gave the directive or instruction; and (d) how many individuals who contacted EDSC were falsely told by the government that they were eligible for EI benefits as a result of such directives?

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 2020 and 2021, employment insurance, or EI, call centre employees had no guidance instructing them to reply in the affirmative whenever individuals inquired about eligibility for EI benefits. Although there were temporary simplification measures in place for benefits, there were eligibility criteria that needed to be met. Employees were expected to inform callers of the criteria and encourage them to apply for all benefits that they might be entitled to in order for them to get a decision. Note also that eligibility decisions are not made at the call centre level, but are instead based on EI applications that have been formally submitted.

Question No. 1170—**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:**

With regard to the Government of Canada's appeal of the Federal Court decision, dated January 6, 2023, allowing for late claimants in the case of Sherry Heyder, Amy Graham, and Nadin Schultz-Nielsen v. The Attorney General of Canada: (a) did the Minister of National Defence instruct the Department of Justice to commence this appeal; (b) what are the total legal costs incurred to date in this case; and (c) what are the legal costs incurred solely as a result of the appeal of the Federal Court's decision on January 6, 2023?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Government of Canada's appeal of the Federal Court decision, dated January 6, 2023, allowing for late claimants in the case of Sherry Heyder, Amy Graham, and Nadin Schultz-Nielsen v. The Attorney General of Canada, the Department of Justice cannot provide a response to part (a) of the question, as it is information protected by legal privileges, including solicitor-client and litigation privileges.

With respect to legal expenses incurred by the government related to Sherry Heyder, Amy Graham, and Nadin Schultz-Nielsen v. The Attorney General of Canada, to the extent that the information requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including

solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has only waived solicitor-client privilege and only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs, as defined below.

The total legal costs, that is, the actual and notional costs, associated with Sherry Heyder, Amy Graham, and Nadin Schultz-Nielsen v. The Attorney General of Canada amount to approximately \$36,020,000, which includes \$30,475,000 for the payment of legal fees to plaintiffs' or class counsel, or \$26,500,000 plus taxes, as approved by the Federal Court in its order dated November 25, 2019. The Government of Canada paid this amount to plaintiffs' or class counsel in early 2020 as required by the final settlement agreement. Legal costs also include notional and actual cost amounts representing the litigation and litigation support services provided by the Department of Justice Canada, which amount to approximately \$5,545,000.

Department of Justice lawyers, notaries and paralegals are salaried public servants, and therefore no legal fees are incurred for their services. A "notional amount" can, however, be provided to account for the legal services they provide. The notional amount is calculated by multiplying the total hours recorded in the responsive files for the relevant period by the applicable approved internal legal services hourly rates. Actual costs represent file-related legal disbursements paid by Justice Canada and then cost-recovered from client departments or agencies. The notional amounts for Justice Canada's legal fees mentioned in this response are based on information contained in Department of Justice systems as of February 15, 2023.

Question No. 1171—**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:**

With regard to the statement in the government's technical backgrounder on the Canada Growth Fund (CGF) that the CGF will be established in 2022 as a subsidiary of the Canada Development Investment Corporation (CDEV): (a) on what date in 2022 was the CGF established as a subsidiary of the CDEV; (b) how many funding applications were received by the CGF in 2022; (c) how much funding was provided by the CGF in 2022; and (d) what are the details of all funding in (c), including the (i) amount, (ii) date funding was provided, (iii) recipient, (iv) project description?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, regarding part (a), the Canada growth fund, or CGF, was incorporated by the Canada Development Investment Corporation, or CDEV, on December 13, 2022. This action was taken following orders in council made on December 2, 2022, directing CDEV to incorporate CGF. They can be found here: <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=42895&lang=en> and <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=42894&lang=en>

*Routine Proceedings*

Regarding parts (b), (c) and (d), no funding has been provided by the Canada growth fund. Implementation of the first phase of the CGF is currently under way. The CGF will make investments that catalyze substantial private sector investment in Canadian businesses and projects to help transform and grow Canada's economy at speed and scale on the path to net zero. The CGF will determine which businesses and organizations will be the recipients of this financing, and it will apply rigorous criteria to each investment it makes.

**Question No. 1179—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the Atomic Workers Recognition Program: (a) how much money has been allocated for the program; (b) of the amount allocated, how much is for (i) payments to beneficiaries, (ii) the administration of the program; (c) how much has been (i) spent to date, (ii) budgeted, for advertising related to the program, broken down by type of media; (d) how many beneficiaries have received payments to date under the program and what is the total value of those payments; and (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by type of beneficiary (worker, surviving spouse)?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, through the atomic workers recognition program, or AWRP, the Government is honouring the exceptional service of former Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, or AECL, employees who responded bravely in a time of crisis. Today, Canada continues to place the highest priority on health, safety and environmental protection in all aspects of the nuclear industry.

With regard to part (a), budget 2021 allocated \$22,273,536 over two years to fund the atomic workers recognition program, beginning in 2021-22.

With regard to part (b), of this total cost amount, \$18,810,000 is provisioned for the ex gratia payments to eligible applicants, and \$3,463,536 is for the administration of the program.

With regard to part (c), the program has a budget of \$50,000 for advertising related to the program, including local print newspaper ads, Spotify radio ads and search engine marketing. From March 31, 2022, until January 31, 2023, the program has spent \$16,910.39 from this budget. The spending has been split between the following: print newspaper ads in The Eganville Leader, the Pembroke Daily Observer, the Arnprior Chronicle, the Renfrew Mercury, the Ottawa Citizen, Le Droit and L'Orléanais; Spotify radio ads in the geo-targeted locations of Eganville, Chalk River, Deep River, Pembroke, Arnprior, Renfrew, Ottawa, Pontiac, Manitoba and New Brunswick; and search engine marketing on Google and Bing.

With regard to part (d), as of January 31, 2023, 388 individual beneficiaries have received payments since the launch of the program on March 31, 2022, for a total value of \$6,088,550 in payments.

With regard to part (e), the individuals who received payments under the program between March 31, 2022, and January 31, 2023, include 43 atomic workers, 314 primary beneficiaries, 17 executors of the atomic workers' estates and 14 primary caregivers.

**Question No. 1184—Mr. Scot Davidson:**

With regard to the renovations to Centre Block and the grounds of Parliament Hill: (a) what is the current projected total cost of the project; (b) what is the current timeline for the project, including the current projected completion date and the year Centre Block will reopen; (c) what is the projected timeline for when the work in front of Centre Block will be completed and the lawn will reopen; and (d) how much has the projected cost of the project increased since construction began, in total, and broken down by each type of expense which has increased?

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the current total projected cost of the Centre Block rehabilitation project is \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion, which remains the same as the baseline established in June 2021. Given the complexity and scale of work involved, the cost range was independently evaluated by Turner & Townsend, a third party cost, time and risk advisory consultant.

The established schedule forecasts an estimated completion of construction in 2030-31. Parliament will then conduct extensive commissioning and testing with the aim of opening Centre Block the following year. The construction site, including work taking place on the lawn in front of Centre Block, is anticipated to remain until the completion of construction.

Following the public baselining of the cost and schedule, PSPC launched public quarterly status reporting on the progress of the project. The Turner & Townsend due diligence report and PSPC's quarterly reports can be found at the following links. For the "Centre Block project due diligence report: Cost report", go to <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/citeparlementaire-parliamentaryprecinct/rehabilitation/edificeducentre-centreblock/rapport-de-cout-cost-report-eng.html>. For the quarterly progress reports on the Centre Block project, go to <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/citeparlementaire-parliamentaryprecinct/rehabilitation/edificeducentre-centreblock/rapprimapec-quarprogrcbp-eng.html>.

**Question No. 1188—Ms. Lori Idlout:**

With regard to access to drinking water in First Nations reserves, broken down by reserve: (a) what is the total number of households on each reserve; and (b) what is the total number of households whose primary water access is through (i) in-home piped water service, (ii) truck delivery, (iii) water wells, (iv) other water source, (v) no water access?

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, insofar as Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, is concerned, the response is as follows.

Through historic investments since 2016, the Government of Canada has made over \$5.6 billion in commitments to first nations to upgrade water and waste-water infrastructure on reserve, to better support the operation and maintenance of systems, to improve the monitoring and testing of community drinking water and to support ongoing efforts to eliminate and prevent drinking water advisories.

*Routine Proceedings*

With regard to parts (a) and (b), disclosing the data broken down by first nation reserve would require the consent of all implicated parties, per the Access to Information Act and ownership, control, access and possession, or OCAP, principles. Disclosure would require third party consultation with 600-plus first nations, which is not feasible within the given time frame.

Of a total of 118,848 homes on reserve, 71% are connected to a piped community water system, 15% are served through a truck-to-cistern system and 13% have individual systems such as a well or lake intake. The remainder are served via other sources or have no water access.

Residents of homes with no water service may have access to clean drinking water through bottle-filling stations, watering points and the provision of bottled water. ISC does not collect data on whether these homes are occupied year round or only seasonally.

**Question No. 1189—Ms. Lori Idlout:**

With regard to wastewater treatment in First Nations reserves, broken down by reserve: (a) what is the total number of households on each reserve; and (b) what is the total number of households that use (i) in-home piped wastewater, (ii) truck haul, (iii) individual wastewater system, (iv) other wastewater system, (v) no wastewater system?

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, insofar as Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, is concerned, the response is as follows.

Through historic investments since 2016, the Government of Canada has made over \$5.6 billion in commitments to first nations to upgrade water and waste-water infrastructure on reserve, to better support the operation and maintenance of systems, to improve the monitoring and testing of community drinking water and to support ongoing efforts to eliminate and prevent drinking water advisories.

With regard to parts (a) and (b), disclosing the data broken down by first nation reserve would require the consent of all implicated parties, per the Access to Information Act and ownership, control, access and possession, or OCAP, principles. Disclosure would require third party consultation with 600-plus first nations, which is not feasible within the given time frame.

Of a total of 118,848 homes on reserve, 53% are connected to a piped community waste-water system, 16% are served through a holding tank-to-truck system and 29% have individual systems such as septic systems. The remaining 2% have no waste-water service. ISC does not collect data on whether homes with no service are occupied year round or only seasonally.

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[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1146, 1147, 1151, 1153 to 1168, 1172 to 1178, 1180 to 1183, and 1185 to 1187 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

**Question No. 1146—Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the government's "Check processing times" webpage, broken down by application type, sub-type, when applicable, and by country: (a) what is the service standard for processing each type of application, measured in days; (b) what is the actual time it takes to process each type of application, measured in days; and (c) during the current fiscal year, broken down by month, how many individuals have been processed (i) within the service standard, (ii) outside the service standard?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1147—Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:**

With regard to civilian work within the Department of National Defense, broken down by fiscal year and province or territory since 2015-16: what is the total value of external contracts issued for (i) food services, (ii) cleaning, (iii) facilities maintenance, (iv) firefighting, (v) administration, (vi) information technology services, (vii) power engineers and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning services?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1151—Mr. Dan Muys:**

With regard to funding from the Universal Broadband Fund or other sources known to the department: how much funding has been allocated to projects that improved broadband living for the residents of Hamilton living within West Flamborough?

(Return tabled)



*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1153—Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to the double taxation of Canadian commuters working from home a few days per week for US-based companies and the impact on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) foreign tax credit of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes deducted in the US and the US 401(k) contributions via the CRA form RC268; (a) must employment be 100 percent exercised in the US per year in order to claim 100 percent of the FICA tax deductions as a foreign tax credit in Canada; (b) if the employment is partially exercised in the US while FICA taxes are deducted based on full employment income by US-based employer regardless of where employment is exercised, would only the percentage of FICA tax deductions equivalent to the percentage of days of employment is exercised in the US be eligible to claim as a foreign tax credit rather than the full actual FICA tax deduction amount; (c) if the answer in (b) is affirmative, why is it not possible for commuters to deduct (on a Canadian tax return via the foreign tax credit) the full FICA tax amount paid in the US based on full employment income even when working from home in Canada; (d) for the 401(k) US pension plan, if employment is only being partially exercised in the US while 401(k) contributions are being made 100 percent throughout the year regardless of where the employment is exercised, would only a percentage of the 401(k) contributions that matches the percentage of days that employment is being exercised in the US be eligible to claim on CRA form RC268; (e) if the answer in (d) is affirmative, is the combination of the lack of a tax deduction credit for the 401(k) portion not eligible to claim on RC268 and the income tax payable during retirement upon 401(k) funds withdrawal considered as double taxation, and, if not, why not; (f) is there a minimum percentage of time that employment must be "exercised" in the US so that Canadian commuters can claim 100 percent of their full year 401(k) contributions on form RC268; (g) if the requirement in (f) is 100 percent or if the answer in (a) is affirmative, could the Department of Finance Canada and the CRA clarify or work to have the convention modified to establish and allow a minimum requirement (a percentage of days of exercising employment in the US vs. total work days) with regard to being allowed to claim 100 percent of FICA taxes and 100 percent of 401(k) contributions; (h) why is the third qualifying bullet on form RC268 not allowed a deduction on the full-year 401(k) contributions (regardless of where employment is exercised); (i) would partially working from home in Canada disqualify Canadian commuters from claiming (i) 100 percent of their 401(k) contributions on Form RC268, (ii) a certain percentage of the full-year 401(k) contributions with respect to the percentage of employment exercised in Canada; (j) how does the Government of Canada, along with the CRA, abide by Article XXIV-ii (Elimination of Double Taxation), if (i) FICA taxes are not fully deductible in Canada through a foreign tax credit, (ii) the 401(k) contributions are disqualified or partially disqualified from being claimed on Form RC268 due to the form's third qualifying bullet?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1154—Mrs. Julie Vignola:**

With regard to the expenditures of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, the Department of National Defence, Global Affairs Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Governor General's trips within Canada in 2022, broken down by department and trip: what was the (i) cost of air and ground transportation, (ii) cost of meals during transport and at destination, including the list of meals, (iii) number of accompanying persons who made the trip and their role, (iv) cost of transportation and security staff and their number and role, (v) cost of accommodation and the list of locations, (vi) cost of travel arrangement fees, (vii) value of receipts submitted by the various staff and accompanying persons, (viii) amount of all other costs related to the trips?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1155—Mrs. Julie Vignola:**

With regard to the expenditures of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, the Department of National Defence, Global Affairs Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Governor General's trips outside Canada since July 26, 2021, broken down by department and trip: what was the (i) cost of air and ground transportation, (ii) cost of meals during transport and at destination, including the list of meals, (iii) number of accompanying persons who made the trip and their role, (iv) cost of transportation and security staff and their number and role, (v) cost of accommodation and the list of locations, (vi) cost of travel arrangement fees, (vii) value of receipts submitted by the various staff and accompanying persons, (viii) amount of all other costs related to the trips?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1156—Mrs. Julie Vignola:**

With regard to the expenditures of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, the Department of National Defence, Global Affairs Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the royal family's visits to Canada since July 26, 2021, broken down by department and visit: what was the (i) cost of air and ground transportation, (ii) cost of meals during transport and at destination, including the list of meals, (iii) number of accompanying persons who made the trip and their role, (iv) cost of transportation and security staff and their number and role, (v) cost of accommodation and the list of locations, (vi) cost of travel arrangement fees, (vii) value of receipts submitted by the various staff and accompanying persons, (viii) amount of expenditures incurred for the Prime Minister, the Governor General and their accompanying persons, (ix) amount of all other costs related to the trips?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1157—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the Weather Modification Information Act, broken down by year since 1985, or as far back as records permit: (a) how many times has the government's administrator been informed of weather modification activities; (b) what are the details of each instance in (a), including, for each, (i) the date and time when and the place where the activity was to be carried out, (ii) who carried out the activity, (iii) the purpose of the activity, (iv) the equipment, materials and methods used, (v) geographic area affected; and (c) how many instances is the government aware of where an individual violated the act, and for each instance, what was the result (warning, fine, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1158—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the government's response to the freedom convoy protests, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) what was the total number of employees or full-time equivalents who were assigned to report, monitor, advise or gather information for their department about the convoy and protestors; (b) was the information collected shared with any banks or other financial institutions, and, if so, which ones; (c) did any non-governmental entities receive this information, and, if so, which ones; and (d) what were the estimated costs associated with the work described in (a)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1159—Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to the Canadian Army's fleet of Leopard II tanks: (a) how many are currently (i) combat capable, (ii) not combat capable, broken down by class of vehicle and by variant; (b) for the tanks in (a)(ii) which are not currently combat capable, when does the government expect them to return to service or to become combat capable; (c) how many are required for training operations, broken down by class of vehicle and by variant; (d) what were the total expenditures on maintenance of Canada's Leopard II tanks since January 1, 2016, broken down by year; (e) what is the expected retirement date of Canada's Leopard II tanks; (f) has the Department of National Defence initiated any consultations or plans to replace Canada's Leopard II tanks and retain the Canadian Army's heavy armour capability, and, if so, what are the details, including when the consultations began and what consultations have begun; and (g) has the government initiated discussions with the Federal Republic of Germany regarding the possible transfer of Leopard II tanks to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and, if so, when were the discussions initiated?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1160—Ms. Leah Gazan:**

With regard to the development of a comprehensive violence prevention strategy announced in the Fall Economic Statement 2020: (a) how much of the \$724.1 million announced has been spent; and (b) broken down by province and territory, how many shelters (i) have been newly opened, (ii) are currently in construction, (iii) are planned, but the construction has not begun?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1161—Mr. Brad Vis:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), broken down by industry under the North American Industry Classification System and province or territory: (a) in total, how many businesses applied for CEBA funding; (b) how many businesses were initially approved for CEBA funding but later deemed ineligible; (c) of the businesses in (b), how many were provided reasons for being deemed ineligible; (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by reason given; (e) what is the dollar amount of CEBA funds that were initially provided to businesses that were later deemed ineligible; (f) in total, how many businesses applied for CEWS funding; (g) how many businesses were initially approved for CEWS funding but later deemed ineligible; (h) of the businesses in (g), how many were provided reasons for being deemed ineligible; (i) what is the breakdown of (h) by reason given; and (j) what is the dollar amount of CEWS funds that were initially provided to businesses that were later deemed ineligible?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1162—Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:**

With regard to funding applications submitted by researchers at Canada's francophone and bilingual universities, broken down by granting agency (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada), by fiscal year from 1980–81 to 2021–22 and by university: (a) how many applications were submitted in (i) French, (ii) English; (b) what proportion of applications were submitted in (i) French, (ii) English; and (c) what was the success rate of applications submitted in (i) French, (ii) English?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1163—Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:**

With regard to scientific research and publication in Canada: what strategic plans, measures, programs and mechanisms have been put in place within the three federal granting agencies (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council) by the government in order to facilitate, ensure, promote or elevate (i) the submission of French-language funding applications, (ii) fair and equitable assessment of French-language funding applications, (iii) the conduct of research in French, (iv) scientific publication in French, (v) the dissemination of scholarly knowledge in French, (vi) the profile and positioning of Canada within the international francophone scientific community?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1164—Mr. Marty Morantz:**

With regard to expenditures on consulting services by the government in the 2021 and 2022 calendar years, broken down by year and by department, agency or other government entity: (a) what was the total amount spent on (i) training consultants (code 0446), (ii) information technology and telecommunications consultants (code 0473), (iii) management consulting (code 0491), (iv) other types of consultants or consulting, broken down by type and object code; and (b) for each response in (a), what is the total value of the expenditures that were (i) awarded competitively, (ii) sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1165—Mr. Ryan Williams:**

With regard to usage of the government's fleet of Challenger aircraft, since September 1, 2022: what are the details of the legs of each flight, including the (i) date, (ii) point of departure, (iii) destination, (iv) number of passengers, (v) names and titles of the passengers, excluding security or Canadian Armed Forces members, (vi) total catering bill related to the flight, (vii) volume of fuel used, or an estimate, (viii) amount spent on fuel?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1166—Mr. Ryan Williams:**

With regard to usage of the government's Airbus CC-150 Polarix aircraft, since September 1, 2022: what are the details of the legs of each flight, including the (i) date, (ii) point of departure, (iii) destination, (iv) number of passengers, (v) names and titles of the passengers, excluding security or Canadian Armed Forces members, (vi) total catering bill related to the flight, (vii) volume of fuel used, or an estimate, (viii) amount spent on fuel?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1167—Mr. Tako Van Popta:**

With regard to the regulatory changes related to amendments to the Insurance Companies Act made in budget 2018: (a) what is the status of the drafting of the regulations; (b) what is the anticipated timeline for publishing the regulations in the Canada Gazette; and (c) what is the anticipated date of bringing these changes into force?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1168—Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:**

With regard to expenditures related to the video released by the government titled "Minister Alghabra clears Santa for take-off in Canadian airspace": (a) what were the total expenditures related to producing the video; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by type of expense (video editing, location rental, etc); (c) how many employees worked on the video; and (d) what are the details of any contracts signed related to the video, including, for each, (i) the vendor, (ii) the amount, (iii) the description of goods or services, (iv) how the contract was awarded (sole source, competitive bid, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1172—Mr. Dan Mazier:**

With regard to the connectivity (i.e. internet, cellular, broadband, etc.) funding announced by the government since November 2015, broken down by year: (a) how much money has been announced for connectivity under the (i) CRTC Broadband Fund, (ii) Strategic Innovation Fund, (iii) Universal Broadband Fund, (iv) Connect to Innovate program, (v) First Nation Infrastructure Fund, (vi) Canada Infrastructure Bank, (vii) Investing in Canada Plan; (b) what are the details of all connectivity projects funded by each funding mechanism in (a), including, for each, the (i) project name and description, (ii) date of funding announcement, (iii) amount of funding, (iv) recipient, (v) date funding was actually transferred to recipient, (vi) current status of project, (vii) date construction began on project, (viii) project location, (ix) original projected completion date, (x) actual completion date or current projected completion date, (xi) reason for delay, if applicable, (xii) number of households or businesses connected through the project; and (c) are there any connectivity projects which were announced by the government but later cancelled, and, if so, what are the details of each, including the (i) date of announcement, (ii) project name and description, (iii) project location, (iv) amount of funding announced, (v) amount of funding transferred to recipient, (vi) date of cancellation, (vii) reason for cancellation?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1173—Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With regard to the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities program, broken down by fiscal year since 2015-16 and province or territory: (a) what are the details of all projects funded through provincial or territorial Aboriginal sport bodies for the development of sport community projects; (b) what are the details of all projects funded through Indigenous governments, communities and not-for-profit Indigenous organizations; and (c) what are the details of all projects funded to ensure that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people have access to sport activity?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1174—Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With regard to the Community Sport for All Initiative, broken down by fiscal year since 2015-16 and province or territory: (a) what is the total number of projects that applied for fundings and were deemed (i) eligible, (ii) ineligible; (b) what are the details of all projects that received funding, including the (i) name of the project, (ii) amount of funding received, (iii) sport or activity, (iv) number of participants in the project; (c) what is the total amount of funding delivered to rural, remote or Northern communities?

(Return tabled)

*Business of Supply***Question No. 1175—Ms. Jenny Kwan:**

With regard to the \$4.3 billion announced for Indigenous housing in budget 2022, broken down by federal electoral district: what are the details of all projects that received funding, including the (i) name of the project, (ii) number of housing units built, (iii) number of housing units under construction, (iv) total number of units approved, (v) total amount of funding received?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1176—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to spending on stock photographs or images by the government since January 1, 2020, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, and other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each contract or expenditure, including (i) the vendor, (ii) the amount, (iii) the details and duration of contract, (iv) the date, (v) the number of photos or images purchased, (vi) where the photos or images were used (Internet, billboards, etc.), (vii) the description of the advertising campaign, (viii) the file number of the contract?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1177—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to personal protective equipment masks purchased by the government: (a) how many masks were purchased each month since January 2021; (b) how much was spent each month on the masks in (a); and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by type of mask (N95, disposable cloth, reusable, etc.) and by manufacturer?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1178—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased by the government since March 1, 2020, broken down by year: (a) what is the total value of PPE purchased by the government that was (i) sole-sourced, (ii) awarded through a competitive bidding process; and (b) what is the total value of PPE contracts that were made under a national security exemption?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1180—Mr. Luc Berthold:**

With regard to expenditures related to the Prime Minister's trip to Jamaica in December 2022 and January 2023: (a) what were the total costs incurred by the government for (i) accommodations, (ii) per diems, (iii) other expenses for the flight crew and government officials who travelled to Jamaica in connection with the Prime Minister's trip; (b) what hotels or resorts did the flight crew and government officials stay at in Jamaica; (c) how much did the Prime Minister reimburse the government in relation to the flight for his family's vacation; and (d) did any government officials travel to Jamaica in a method other than on the Challenger flight which carried the Prime Minister's family and, if so, how many officials travelled through other means, and how much was spent on their airfare?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1181—Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:**

With regard to the Crown corporation Export Development Canada (EDC) and McKinsey & Company: has EDC offered any contracts to McKinsey & Company since January 1, 2011, and, if so, what is the nature of these contracts and what are the amounts involved?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1182—Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency's post-payment compliance work related to the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy: (a) what metrics are being used in the assessment of risk of non-compliance; (b) how is each metric in (a) used; (c) how many recipient companies were audited for suspected non-compliance; (d) how many of the audits in (c) (i) are completed, (ii) resulted in a finding of non-compliance; and (e) how much money resulting from findings of non-compliance (i) has been recovered, (ii) is still outstanding, (iii) has been written off?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1183—Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Business Account, broken down by program: (a) how many organizations which

received funding are (i) in receivership, (ii) insolvent; and (b) how much funding did the organizations in (a) receive?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1185—Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission (GLFC), since 2016, and broken down by year: (a) what are the details of all funding transfers between the DFO and the GLFC, including, for each, the (i) sender, (ii) recipient, (iii) date, (iv) amount, (v) type of funding or reason for the transfer; (b) which line item in the DFO's financial statements included the funds allocated to or received from the GLFC; (c) which of the GLFC related funding commitments in budget 2022 will be shown in the financial statements of the DFO and how will they be listed; and (d) which of the GLFC related funding commitments in budget 2022 will be shown in the financial statements of another government department or agency, and which department or agency will each commitment be listed with?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1186—Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, broken down by month: (a) what were the delivery times for permanent resident cards, from when the application was received to the issuance of a card, for the time periods between (i) July and December 2019, (ii) July and December 2022; and (b) what was the average time between the confirmation of the permanent residency and the issuance of the card, between (i) July and December 2019, (ii) July and December 2022?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1187—Ms. Lori Idlout:**

With regard to expenditures related to the lifting of long-term and short-term drinking water advisories on First Nations reserves since fiscal year 2015-16: (a) what is the total amount provided, broken down by individual Nation and reserve, for boil-water advisories that (i) have been lifted, (ii) are still in effect; and (b) for each boil water advisory still in effect, what are the expected costs to lift each advisory?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby made his speech a little while ago, but I want to thank him. I would like him to come back to the importance of having an independent, totally non-partisan, public inquiry that would be voted on in the House of Commons.

*Business of Supply*

I want to mention the statement made by my colleague from Trois-Rivières, who aptly described at the outset the importance of public trust. The current government's complacency is undermining the public's trust in government. We are going to go from mistrust to defiance, as the member for Trois-Rivières said so well.

I would like my colleague to expand on that point and perhaps explain why he thinks the government wants to buy time.

• (1535)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my Bloc Québécois colleague. As I mentioned in my speech, that is why the NDP will move a motion tomorrow that we were able to have adopted at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This motion requires that a public, transparent and independent public inquiry be held to examine all concerns and allegations concerning foreign interference.

Of course this is important for the NDP. We are very pleased to have received the support of other parties on this matter, and tomorrow, as I already mentioned, we will propose that this report be adopted. It was adopted by the committee and we want the House of Commons to adopt it. Naturally, there will be a debate, but every member will have the opportunity to vote on this important motion. We hope to count on everyone's support. We also hope to push the government to take action and to launch this public inquiry, which should absolutely be independent and transparent.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I tried to ask the member this question before, but he did not answer it, so I want to give him another opportunity.

The leader of the NDP said, “up to this point...I have seen [that] the committee, and the way it is operating, is more so a forum for scoring [political] points on each other. The Conservatives are trying to score points on the Liberals”. He went on to say, “And so, that, to me, is the wrong use of our resources. The fact that a committee is being used in a partisan way to score points on something [is inappropriate].”

As a matter of fact, this member, on February 21 in the PROC committee, said, “I caution on the issue of inviting staff [to committee].” He went on to say, “Around the issue of political staff, as opposed to having ministers being brought forward to testify, I support having ministers come forward to explain what they did [and why].”

Given that this motion is all about inviting staff to committee, can the member give some insight into why the NDP is even considering whether to support it, given his comments in committee and the comments by the leader of the NDP? He did not answer the question the last time I asked. I am really hoping that he can actually answer my question this time.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands is being disingenuous. I absolutely did answer the question, but he did not like the answer.

The reality is that if we ask Canadians from coast to coast to coast what they want to see, they want to see resources invested

now in a national public inquiry that is transparent and independent. I am answering this question now for the second time. It is the same question he asked, and I am giving the same answer. Resources need to go to a national public inquiry now. That is what Canadians want.

My question back to the member for Kingston and the Islands is simply this: Why is the government stonewalling something that Canadians want, and want to see now, and why is the government not investing those resources so that we can have the national public inquiry that so many Canadians want to see?

[Translation]

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I agree with the need to take foreign interference very seriously, and I want to ask the member whether he agrees that we should look at not just the 2019 and 2020 elections, but at the others as well.

I know that the NDP thinks that we need to examine interference from other parts of the world, but could we also not examine more elections because we need more information to protect our democratic systems?

• (1540)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the fact that my colleague from Waterloo spoke in French and I also appreciate the work that she does as the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The reality is that we are calling for a public inquiry. As the member is well aware, the NDP proposed to the committee a broader public inquiry on foreign interference. The Conservatives tried to amend the NDP's motion and reduce the scope of this public inquiry by removing the allegations of interference that we have already seen, even though the agencies have indicated that they are just as worrisome. Take, for example, the interference by Russia, Iran and other countries. I do not know why the Conservatives wanted to reduce the scope of this inquiry.

The NDP is proposing a broader scope. It is important that the government take action now to set up this public inquiry, which should absolutely be transparent and independent.

[English]

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the last number of weeks, since these stories started to break and since the leader of the official opposition started asking questions about this very important issue, I have heard from many constituents who have found that the faith they need to have in our democratic institutions has been shaken.

*Business of Supply*

My question for the member from the NDP is simple. Can we count on his support tomorrow so we can get the answers required for Canadians to have that trust in their democratic institutions restored?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the NDP is presenting its motion on the public inquiry. Tomorrow, Conservatives will have a chance to vote for the NDP motion. The Conservatives have been all over the map on this, trying to pull apart the NDP proposal for a vast and extensive public inquiry into foreign interference. I hope that tomorrow Conservatives will support the NDP motion.

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Thornhill.

It is a privilege to speak in the House on behalf of the good residents of Brantford—Brant on our Conservative motion, which would essentially compel the Prime Minister's chief of staff to appear as a witness.

Canadians have heard numerous media reports on foreign interference in our democratic processes, particularly by the Communist regime in Beijing. We, as a society, cannot allow foreign governments to manipulate our elections and influence the will of our people. Any interference tries to undermine the very foundation of our democracy and threatens our sovereignty, especially when it is plotted by authoritarian regimes.

The CSIS whistle-blower who leaked the story did so at great professional and legal risk. He or she put country over career and country over everything, which is the Canadian way. That is how our society should work. This is a serious matter that requires our full attention and immediate action. Canadians deserve the truth and nothing less.

From day one, our leader called on the government and all parties in the House to launch an open public inquiry that would answer all the questions and concerns that people have. In this case, only two people can provide us with answers: the Prime Minister and his chief of staff, Katie Telford.

As always, the Liberals decided to use their tactics of denial and deflection. Rather than explain what he knows, the Prime Minister is suggesting there should be an investigation into what he already knows. After all these years and numerous scandals, particularly those of SNC-Lavalin and WE Charity, accountability was never the goal of the Liberal government. Its goal is to prolong the scandal as much as possible until no one can remember why it matters.

For the past several weeks, the Liberals have been unnecessarily fighting attempts to have Telford appear before committee to testify. They have delayed votes, given long speeches to run out the clock and even refused to show up for meetings, all in an attempt to block Telford from appearing. Almost 24 hours of committee work has been wasted for this single cause.

Hearing from Katie is vital to any investigation into the Global News story because she would have been the top advisor who CSIS would have advised in 2019 in providing a brief on concerns about the Liberal candidate and his ties to the Chinese foreign interference network. She has been chief of staff since 2015, and she has the top secret clearance needed to be briefed.

The Prime Minister rightly said that voters, not intelligence services, get to pick who represents them, but if those intelligence services believe a candidate is compromised by a foreign government, voters should know that before casting their ballots. Having Telford come before the committee to tell MPs what the government did with the intelligence, if anything, is a necessary step in restoring confidence in our democracy. The fact that the Liberals refuse to allow this to happen may tell us a lot. Probably what she has to say would shake what is left over of that confidence even more.

It is time to end the Katie cover-up. The New Democrats have a choice to make: Will they vote for transparency and answers on Beijing's interference in our elections, or will they again prop up the Prime Minister? We insist that Canadians must hear from Katie Telford and learn what the Prime Minister knew, when he first knew about it and what he did or failed to do.

Katie is the highest ranking political staffer in the Prime Minister's Office. She supports not only the Prime Minister but also his entire cabinet. It is a powerful, yet largely behind-the-scenes role. Unlike other public servants, her job is a political one. She works not only for the PMO, but also for the Liberal Party during elections. Calling political staff, current or former, to testify is not something extraordinary. She testified before the finance committee on the WE scandal and on the sexual misconduct in the military in 2021. Last year, she testified before the Rouleau commission.

Any international attempts to interfere in our elections should be a non-partisan issue. The fact that the Liberals are making it one and trying to stop investigations should make everyone question their motives, and today we call on all parties in the House to support our motion and stop the endless filibustering by Liberal members, who are deliberately blocking the Prime Minister's chief of staff from testifying.

While the Prime Minister claims that his approach to the issue is "grounded in facts and independent decision making," he is the one who is playing the partisan games in the hope of delaying any serious investigation or discussion about interference. As revelation after revelation reveals, the Liberal government knew about China's election interference. It had four years. It did not inform the public. It did not recall any diplomatic staff. It did not pursue any legal remedies.

*Business of Supply*

• (1545)

Poll after poll shows that the majority of Canadians are concerned about China's attempts to meddle in our elections. A recent Abacus Data poll showed that 67% of Canadians support a public inquiry into that issue, and in fact, 70% of Liberals support it.

It is irresponsible to silence a matter of a foreign government attempting to corrupt our election by pressuring members of the Chinese diaspora. If that does not qualify for the fullest and most public examination, then one must ask oneself this question: What will?

There are lots of questions the Prime Minister does not want to answer. Number one, were the Liberals briefed by national security officials that at least one Liberal candidate in 2019 was allegedly part of the interference network from Beijing? Two, did they willfully ignore that warning because it was to their advantage? Three, did they know that 11 candidates in that election, nine of whom were Liberals, were favoured by Beijing? Four, were Trudeau and his advisors also briefed about China working to defeat Conservative candidates in 2021—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Members cannot use the names of other members. The hon. member used the Prime Minister's name.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, my apologies.

Were the Prime Minister and his advisors briefed that China was working to defeat Conservative candidates in 2021 so that a Liberal minority government would be elected? Five, did they know that the former Chinese consulate general in Vancouver bragged in 2021 about helping to defeat two Conservative candidates?

The heart of this scandal is not that there has been electoral interference, it is that the Liberals allegedly knew there was electoral interference but did nothing because it was to their benefit. CSIS leaked a quote from a Chinese consulate official who said, “The Liberal Party of Canada is becoming the only party that the People's Republic of China can support.”

The best guarantee of good government is still vigilance of an effective parliamentary opposition. It does not matter to Liberals that the opposition has not actually suggested that the outcomes of the previous two elections are in question. Liberals are at best misguided in seeking to demonize the opposition using the very partisanship and rhetoric they denounce.

The Prime Minister seeks to wedge the issue out of legitimate opposition concerns for the safety and integrity of Canadian elections. He does a grave injustice to our system of democracy by doing so. The role of opposition is to hold the government's feet to the fire, not so that they can get warm and toasty, but so they can feel the heat of parliamentary scrutiny.

It seems like the Liberals are playing all the cards when it comes to burying the story. Number one, the Prime Minister used the Trump card when he said that giving reasons to mistrust elections is not good for society and is something that we have seen from other elections, echoing a senior Liberal who more openly accused the opposition of Trump-style tactics.

Number two is the “nothing to see here” card, which he played when he said, “Canadians can have...confidence in the integrity of

our elections.” Number three is the partisanship card. The Prime Minister accused the opposition of sowing confusion and mistrust by even raising the allegation.

Number four is the “it is all lies” card from when he said, “We are very concerned with the [Global News] leaks, particularly because there are so many inaccuracies in those leaks.” Number five, and the most disturbing, is the racism card. The Prime Minister referred to a rise in anti-Asian rhetoric to deflect a question on the subject.

The Liberal MPs have been successful in blocking a vote for far too long. Canadians must know that Katie Telford has the information that she received from CSIS, but she has either made the decision to keep the Prime Minister in the dark, as she did during the scandal of sexual misconduct in the military, which is disturbing on its own, or maybe she did notify the Prime Minister and he kept quiet about it. Either way, people need to know what is going on in this country.

Lastly, I turn to the leader of the third party, the leader of the NDP and his caucus.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, you have got an extremely important choice. When you were elected, you were elected to represent all of your constituents, not just those constituents who voted for you. It is time for you to make a decision. Will you support this country, get to the heart of this matter and deal with this appropriately, or will you continue to prop up the government?

• (1550)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, it is one thing to say “through you” and then suddenly turn to direct all comments and point fingers at another member. It is pretty clear what is going on.

I do not think that the member was saying all of that to you personally, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps he would want to reflect on the rules of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind members not to speak directly to one another. They should speak to the Chair and through the Chair when speaking to individuals.

I will let the hon. member for Brantford—Brant finish up the last 30 seconds of his speech.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Everything that I said in my last 30 seconds, Mr. Speaker, was always through you. The fact is that I turned and looked at NDP members. Unfortunately, I cannot speak to the leader, but, notwithstanding that, the choice is there.

*Business of Supply*

Will the New Democrats continue to prop up the government, or will they get to the heart of the scandal and find out what Katie Telford knew?

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I have a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I know we have a point of order, but I will bring up that members cannot say whether a member is in the chamber or not, and they cannot speak directly to a person and must speak through the Chair. Those are some basic rules that we follow in the House of Commons, and I want to remind everyone of them.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide some thoughts on the inconsistency that comes from the leader of the Conservative Party. When he was the minister responsible for elections and democracy in Canada, we know there was foreign interference. Today's leader of the Conservative Party had the opportunity to do something about it and he chose to do nothing.

If we look at the motion the Conservatives are proposing today, the leader of the Conservative Party indicated back then that it is not the staff but the ministers who go to committee. Once again, we have the leader of the Conservative Party saying one thing when he is in government and saying something totally different when he becomes the crown prince of the Conservative Party.

I am wondering if the member shares my concerns about consistency and hypocrisy.

• (1555)

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The irony is that Liberal members have been pretty quick to point out anything that comes close to skirting the rules and procedures of this place. I would ask for guidance as to what the member just stated regarding the Leader of the Opposition.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We all need to remind ourselves that the Standing Orders of the House of Commons are really important to us, and we should all follow them as closely as possible.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to disappoint my friend, but there is very little my friend says that I agree with, and it should come as no surprise to my friend that I completely disagree with the characterization of his question.

The point of the matter is that Katie Telford, as the chief of staff, is not an ordinary staffer. She is a staffer who has been so closely intertwined in everything the Prime Minister has done. When he was leader of the third party in Parliament, she was responsible for all of his elections. She is his principal, primary adviser. She is the one at the heart of the matter who can finally shed some light on the mystery shrouding the Liberal government and fostering mistrust.

In my opinion, both she and the Prime Minister ought to be testifying, because the Prime Minister has much to answer to as well.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

We know that China thinks that the Liberals will go easier on them. Given everything we have learned, the leaks, we see that China is probably right in thinking that. The government knew about this for a long time but did nothing.

That said, I would ask my colleague why he did not take this opportunity today to ask, instead, for a public and independent commission of inquiry. The motion before us could have been discussed in committee; it is a committee motion.

Why not ask for a public and independent commission of inquiry?

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, I was very clear in my speech. The leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition has always been very clear on this point. We fully support an independent public inquiry that has subpoena power. We would not be in this particular situation if the justice assigned to the public inquiry could subpoena the Prime Minister and Katie Telford. We would not be in this mess.

To answer the member's question, yes, that is the ultimate outcome that we as Canada's Conservatives would like to see, but until such time as that becomes reality, if at all, we need to have Katie Telford testify.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for an important intervention, but to clarify important facts, the New Democrats stand firm on our call for a public independent inquiry into foreign interference. Why politicize all of this and not talk about other foreign actors like Russia, for example? In committee, we mentioned foreign interference by forces like Russia. The Conservatives played defence for them and said they are not the problem and we need to look at China.

We fully agree that China is a serious problem. However, would the member agree that foreign interference by other countries is also worth investigating? Would the Conservatives join our call for a public inquiry into all foreign interference?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree that there are problems with foreign interference by other nations, and this is not exclusive to China. Russia is one of them. However, this particular motion is narrowly defined. We are here to discuss China, not Russia and not any other nation.

*Business of Supply*

Insofar as the member's overall goal for a public inquiry goes, this motion is not about a public inquiry. This motion is very specific to Katie Telford. I ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, whether this member will address the constituents in his riding in Alberta who are calling for Katie Telford to shed some light on this controversy. Will he speak for those constituents?

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, if the member would like to speak to me directly about these questions, I would be very happy to speak to him directly. However, simply saying “through you”—

• (1600)

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order, and I would invite everyone to step outside and have a discussion if they need to, because we want to keep up with what is going on here in the House of Commons.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, the member is making a point of order. At the end, he said that simply saying “through you, Mr. Speaker” does not allow members, given what the rules are, to start speaking to somebody directly.

**An hon. member:** Debate.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** How is that debate? I am literally talking about a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I welcome everyone to speak to one another, to come up with plans and to debate things judiciously on the floor of the House of Commons. Knowing that, I want to move on to the next speaker.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, time is up. The public confidence in our democratic system is rightly in question. Explosive allegations of foreign interference from senior security officials ignored by the highest levels of government, including the PM himself, splashed all over the front pages of our newspapers have Canadians asking a couple of simple questions: What did the Prime Minister know and when did he know it?

The NDP members have a choice to make. Will they vote for transparency and answers on Beijing's interference in our elections, or will they vote for the Prime Minister's cover-up? Will they vote to cover up what the Prime Minister knew, when he knew it and what he did or did not do about it?

For those watching at home, here is what we do know. It starts with sums of money of up to \$1 million that were given to causes near and dear to the Prime Minister, including a donation of nearly \$200,000 to the Trudeau Foundation and a gift of \$50,000 to put a statue of Pierre Trudeau up. These transfers were arranged by a billionaire who was described in *The Globe and Mail* as “a senior official in...[a] network of state promoters around the world.” He appeared at Liberal Party fundraisers in the intimate presence of the Prime Minister and, according to sources, was reimbursed for his activities by the Communist Party in Beijing. This should raise concern.

Again, two questions remain. What did the Prime Minister know and when did he know about it? NDP members have a choice to make today, a simple choice: Do they want to know, or will vote for the Prime Minister's continued cover-up?

To get back to what we know, the goal of these endeavours, everything I just talked about, was to curry favour with a government that was perceived to be friendlier to Communist interests. As one official was quoted as saying, “red is good and blue is bad.” They sought cash for access. They sought positive trade terms. They sought international co-operation. By most accounts, the relationship was going swimmingly well, and many in Beijing were “extremely pleased”.

Again, what did the Prime Minister know and when did he know it? Will NDP members show some courage tomorrow when they vote? Will they vote to cover for the Prime Minister? Will they vote with the Liberals or will they vote with Canadians?

Let us fast-forward to 2018. Here is more of what we know. The association between Canada and China began to sour. However, senior Communist officials saw another opportunity to destabilize and discredit elections here in Canada to gain greater influence in our country. They had the goal of electing a Liberal minority government, one that would be friendlier to the Communist Party than the alternatives, and one that would be unstable and marked by backroom deals and infighting. One senior diplomat said it best when they said Beijing likes it “when the parties in Parliament are fighting with each other, whereas if there is a majority, the party in power can easily implement policies that do not favour [the PRC].”

We know they waged an unprecedented campaign to make that ideal a reality. They meddled in nomination processes to get their preferred candidates chosen. They funnelled money to 11 candidates in the GTA alone. They organized volunteers. They coerced and intimidated voters. That was all in the newspapers. CSIS uncovered evidence of this interference, but according to sources, the warnings of our intelligence agencies were ignored. This was in the papers.

Again, what did the Prime Minister know and when did he know it? That is why we are here today. We are also here to see whether NDP members agree. Will they cover for the Prime Minister? Will they cover up the interference? Will they cover up what he knew and when he knew about it?

The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians gave a specific warning that meddling from Beijing was “eroding the foundations of our fundamental institutions, including our system of democracy itself”. It does not get much more serious than that.



*Business of Supply*

With all of that out in the open, the Liberal Party failed to overturn the nominations of compromised candidates that were brought directly to their attention, according to what was written. They failed to seriously grasp the message offered by our security agencies, according to what was written. In fact, they failed to take any action at all.

Therefore, I will ask this again. What did the Prime Minister know and when did he know it? That is the question today.

The Communist strategy worked so well that it was repeated in 2021, possibly even on a wider scale. Misinformation and disinformation were rampantly and blatantly spread to voters. Preferred candidates were promoted and opposed candidates were targeted. One senior diplomat from Beijing even boasted about having defeated two Conservative MPs in the last election. This is known. It is in the public domain, and no one on the other side is able to give Canadians a single rebuttal saying it is not true. We have asked.

• (1605)

Again I ask: What did the Prime Minister know, and when did he know it? That is why we are here.

There is evidence that the answer is “a substantial amount”. The Prime Minister's own national security advisor confirmed that she briefed the Prime Minister multiple times on foreign interference. CSIS intelligence was shared, but again, warnings were ignored, and no substantial action was taken.

There is evidence that Beijing's strategy is working. They have opened police stations in our own country to harass and survey free people living here. It is crickets from the Liberals.

A scientist fired from the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg was named on several documents in China related to discoveries from her time working in the federal government. Several of our universities have collaborated with scholars associated with the Communist regime. The government has vacillated on important issues relating to national security, such as the Huawei issue.

We are seeing a pattern here in our own country. Why would anyone conclude that in the absence of doing anything at all, this would not get worse? Canadians need to know that their government is at least taking an interest in how to stop this or answering the basic questions that Canadians have. This is cloaked in secrecy by a Prime Minister who is ranting from a podium daily about how everybody should learn a lesson or take this seriously or is saying that everybody is racist. That is what we are hearing from the Prime Minister, but there is never a single answer about this.

What did the Prime Minister know, and when did he know it? Empty platitudes are not going to cut it, nor is having a secret committee with secret evidence that provides secret conclusions to the Prime Minister, who could redact those documents, or telling everyone that it is important but continuing to do nothing about it.

Our efforts have been met with never-ending spin and the ever-so-familiar playbook that we have seen time and time again to deny, deflect, divide and distract. It is like a recipe, and the Liberals always use the same one.

It is time for unfettered access to officials, including the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, and documents and briefings, all at committee and out in the open. It is time to shine a light on foreign interference, just like our intelligence agency says is the way to root it out. It is time to get answers and to end the charade.

The Prime Minister has run out of excuses and other people to blame. It seems that he will run out of people who are his friends to appoint to important positions. The NDP should not be giving the Prime Minister cover today.

The Liberals have been filibustering a motion for hours on end at committee, and that is the reason we are here. What are they hiding? It must be bad. Why else would the Liberals go through this whole process, hide at every turn and continue to spin, attack and divide? That is not really behaviour of people who are innocent.

This is about our election integrity and the integrity of our democracy. It is about every member in this House. Any time there are even questions about those processes, we owe every Canadian nothing less than the most detailed explanations and answers.

We do that through this motion and not by listening to members of the government carry water for the Prime Minister or take orders about filibustering. I have a question, and I know that Canadians are wondering the same thing. Does anybody over there have any courage? Does anybody over there wonder what the Prime Minister knew and when he knew it? Did anyone over there bother to ask? What did we all know about this?

If the Liberal members want to talk out the clock at a committee process they control, then it is time we put it in the hands of parliamentarians interested in the actual truth. It is time for the NDP to show some courage when it matters instead of the bluster we hear at the podium, when we are only disappointed by the unwavering support they constantly give to the Liberal government.

Anything less than a complete disclosure is not good enough for Canadians. Anything less than full answers will not be accepted by the opposition. What did the Prime Minister know, and when did he know it? We need to find out.

*Business of Supply*

• (1610)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has indicated that the government has been trying to hide at every turn, which could not be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, we have had two ministers already come and answer questions by committee on this. We have told Canadians about a number of different measures we are going to take. The issue for me is inviting staff and requiring them to come to a committee, when at the end of the day, ministers are responsible, not staff. The member does not have to take this just from me; she should listen to her boss, the member from Carleton and the Leader of the Opposition. In 2010, he said:

...ministers answer questions on behalf of the government and not staff. We are not going to be changing 300 years of history all of a sudden at the behest of the coalition parties. We are not going to have the staff members appear in question period to answer on behalf of the government. We are going to do it the old-fashioned way, the way it has always been done right up until the last several months. We are going to keep ministers, the guys in charge, responsible for their duties.

That was the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, who said that not staff but ministers come to committees. Why is it okay now to do this, but it was not for the member for Carleton back then?

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, it was okay for the Prime Minister's chief of staff to testify in the WE scandal at committee and to appear during the scandal of sexual assault in the military. It was okay on those two occasions. I think the better question is why it is not okay today. If she does not want to appear as the Prime Minister's chief of staff, perhaps she can appear as the campaign director of the Liberal Party campaign and the member's own leadership, who oversees nominations in his party. Why does she not appear under that title?

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister, who was simply the member for Papineau at the time, said in 2013 that he had “a level of admiration...for China. Their basic dictatorship is actually allowing them to turn their economy around on a dime”. We are still not sure if he meant the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, or the Tiananmen Square massacre. However, enough about that.

We know that there were all the stories about financing activities. We also know that the Prime Minister wanted to sign a free trade agreement with China that would have been disastrous for Canada and that he even wanted to include China in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, an agreement that was meant to unify Asia through trade without China.

None of it makes sense, but the common thread is complacency. We also learned that, in November 2022, a warning was issued about Chinese interference in the 2019 election. Does my colleague think the problem is that the Prime Minister does not see it, or that he does not want to see it?

[English]

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, I happen to agree with the hon. member's assessment and that, at every turn, the current gov-

ernment has hidden the truth, and we want to know what that is. It has hidden what the Prime Minister knew about the potential election interference that is now splashed over the pages of our newspapers from foreign intelligence officers, and it has done nothing about it. In fact, it has kicked the can down the road even further to have a plan to maybe look into it or to appoint somebody who will then tell us that they could possibly have an inquiry. Canadians deserve the truth. The time is up for these guys.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know from NSICOP's foreign interference report from a few years ago that there are a number of countries alleged to be interfering in Canadian democratic processes. Does my hon. colleague think the motion is broad enough to encompass all those countries, not just China? I think Canadians want to make sure their elections are free and clear of all foreign interference, not just that of one particular country.

My second question has to do with the fact that we know the only person who has resigned from a caucus in this country so far over interference is a Conservative MPP in Ontario, Vincent Ke. We have also heard allegations that there was potentially Chinese interference in the ousting of the previous Conservative leader, the member from Durham.

Can the member tell us what steps her party is taking to root out alleged Chinese interference in the political internal affairs of the Conservative Party?

• (1615)

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer the member's first question. We have detailed reporting from a courageous whistle-blower who probably told the government. The government probably did not listen to him and then splashed it over the front pages of our newspapers. I do not know how the member is going to explain to his constituents that he does not want to know more about it or that he is going to support the cover-up of the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Yukon today.

I would like to start today by speaking directly to the seriousness of these allegations, the seriousness of foreign interference generally and what the government has been doing.

I would say to the member who spoke just before me that the claim that we have done nothing is absolutely ludicrous. I would remind the member that on December 18, 2020, the then minister of public safety mailed a copy of a public report regarding election interference specifically as it relates to China to every single member in this House of Commons. I am sure that she received and reviewed it, as did all Conservative MPs, yet they have the gall to stand up in this House and suggest that we are being secretive or that information is not being shared with them.

*Business of Supply*

In addition to that, what has this government done? We created NSICOP, which specifically allows parliamentarians and senators to review highly classified information. We passed the Election Modernization Act to help tackle foreign interference, Bill C-76, which Conservatives voted against. We created a panel of experts to monitor in real time what was going on with respect to foreign interference during an election and gave them the ability and the power to act on it.

We put in tighter controls on advertising and online platforms. We closed fundraising loopholes to keep foreign money out of elections. We enhanced the integrity of the voters list.

Foreign election interference has been going on for about 10 years. Now, as a result of the real concerns that Canadians have, and rightly so, it is at least being talked about a lot more in the mainstream, as we have seen in other countries.

The Prime Minister and indeed this side of the House are seized with what is going on. We take this very seriously. That is why the Prime Minister empowered NSICOP and NSIRA to specifically look into the issue of foreign interference and why he has appointed an incredible Canadian, David Johnston, to look at the issue and recommend to the Prime Minister the best course of action to move forward, which very well might be a public inquiry. This government has already said, in advance of knowing what any of those recommendations might be, that we will accept and implement them.

Therefore, for the member for Thornhill to come in here and suggest that this government has done absolutely nothing about foreign interference and has been secretive is just completely untrue.

I find it very interesting that we are getting this lecture from the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, and his MPs about sending staff to committee. It was the member for Carleton who, in 2010, said this to the CBC. I will read it out again because I think it is just so telling, and the video is widely available for anybody to go back and review.

He said:

...ministers answer questions on behalf of the government and not staff. We are not going to be changing 300 years of history all of a sudden at the behest of the coalition parties. We are not going to have the staff members appear in question period to answer on behalf of the government. We are going to do it the old-fashioned way, the way it has always been done right up until the last several months. We are going to keep ministers, the guys in charge, responsible for their duties.

I always get a kick out of the use of that terminology, “the guys in charge”. Of course the member for Carleton would phrase it like that.

That was the member for Carleton when he was in government. He was answering a question as to whether staff, in particular, Dimitri Soudas, the then prime minister's director of communications, would go to committee.

I think the hypocrisy here is literally oozing out of that side of the House and dribbling down towards the aisle here when I listen to what is coming from over there.

At the time, the NDP, I believe with other political parties, were able to get through a motion to require Mr. Soudas to appear before

committee, yet he never did. Do members know who appeared? Stephen Harper sent John Baird, one of his ministers at the time, to deal with the situation.

In response to Mr. Easter asking why he was there and not the person who was called to the committee, Mr. Baird said, “the government believes the opposition is playing politics with parliamentary committees and is not respecting due process and fair play.”

● (1620)

Does that sound familiar? “They are conducting random interrogations without due process or any rules of fairness. That might be how things work in the United States Congress, but it's not the Canadian tradition. In Canada the constitutional principle is ministerial responsibility.” That is what John Baird said when Stephen Harper defied the request of Parliament for Dimitri Soudas, the director of communications in the Prime Minister's Office, to appear before committee.

This new-found approach from the Conservatives is to suddenly be so incredibly hypocritical. I will not even hold it against the new members who have come along since 2015. However, in particular, the member for Carleton was not just an MP who happened to be around the House at the time, but he was actually leading the file. Is he suddenly standing here saying it is completely appropriate now?

I asked the member for Thornhill, just before my speech, why it is okay now, and she was totally unable to give an answer. Her answer basically was that the chiefs of staff have already come forward from the government. What she is basically saying is that we should never have set the precedent, because now Conservatives are running rampant all over it, using every possible opportunity. Where does it end from here? That is the question.

Every time Conservatives want to drum up a fake scandal, they are going to run in here and use the same language they are using now. No one is doing China's work better for them than the Conservative MPs right now, who are sowing the seeds of distrust in our democratic institutions. That is what is happening right now, and it is Conservative MPs' responsibility for all of it.

*Business of Supply*

This comes down to politics, and I am not the only one saying this is politically motivated. Push aside all the people who are Liberal, NDP and non-partisan. Push them aside for a second and let us just talk about Conservatives who are calling out this rhetoric. Fred DeLorey, the campaign manager from a year and a half ago, is on nightly. It is like he is lining up to get on every talk show or every panel he can on CTV and CBC. He is everywhere right now, basically saying that the Conservatives are just trying to score political points.

Vern White, a former Conservative senator, has referred to what is going on as “BS”. That is what he actually said. He is a former Conservative senator because at some point he came to the realization that this political party is way further to the right than where it had been when he was appointed a senator, if we can believe that. Former senator Hugh Segal, who represented my area and whom I have an incredible amount of respect for, has also—

• (1625)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Listen to them heckle, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea of the incredible things that Hugh Segal has done just for my area. He is a great champion of a basic income guarantee. He referred to what the Conservatives are doing as the “Chicken Little” nature of the opposition. This is a Conservative. It goes on.

Then, of course, there is the most recent comment by the member for Carleton himself, which I found very telling and which highlighted the politics of this, when he, the Leader of the Opposition, said he did not want a briefing. He was asked whether, if he were offered a briefing, he would take that briefing on what was going on. He said he would not do that because that means it would be illegal for him to speak out.

We basically have the Leader of the Opposition saying he does not want to know the information, even though it might be helpful to Canada, that he would rather be oblivious so he can continue scoring political points and because it works a lot better in his fundraising emails that he blasts out every day. That is what he would much rather do.

This really does fall in the hands of the NDP. The NDP gets to decide what happens here. Do we keep playing political theatre, which is exactly what China wants, or do we actually look into this in a meaningful way that can get answers for Canadians and that can get Canadians confidence in the system, in particular, the strong fundamental institution of democracy that we have here?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my colleague, especially when he talked about the fact that we are attacking the institutions. There is a real road map, I would say, from the Liberal government, since it was elected, to attack our institutions.

When this Liberal government was in trouble with the WE Charity, what did it do? Well, it prorogued the House.

When it had the problem with the SNC-Lavalin scandal, what did it do? It kicked out the justice minister, who had been the first aboriginal minister to sit in this very important post. Why? It was because the Prime Minister said, “We need to get re-elected.”

When it has the deep problem right now with the Beijing intervention in our system, it said, well, that is not true.

After that, it said, well, the journalists are all wrong and we have to find the leak, exactly like Watergate.

How can we be serious with the Liberal government? How can the Liberal government be serious when it has been attacking our democracy for the last eight years?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, we can see the politics of it right there. When he was trying to define what the Prime Minister was saying, he put it in quotes. He said, “We need to get re-elected”. The Prime Minister never said that.

He cannot provide me with a single time the Prime Minister actually said that. The member is just making assumptions and trying to put it in quotes as though it is something that actually happened.

He talked about a track record. He is absolutely right that we have a track record. We have a track record when it comes to dealing with foreign interference.

We have actually made election security a priority. We have put in an oversight process over elections. We have tasked NSICOP with ensuring it has oversight from a parliamentary perspective. We have tightened up fundraising loopholes. We have cracked down on the wild west advertising schemes that used to exist. We have ensured the integrity of the voters list and we have appointed a special independent expert to specifically look at this issue that we are seized with today, foreign interference.

Yes, we have a track record when it comes to that.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his presentation. He spoke about what his government did, but I would prefer to know what his government failed to do.

When he spoke about the report, was he referring to the report by Morris Rosenberg, a friend of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation? Was he speaking about the special rapporteur, Mr. Johnston, who is a friend of the Prime Minister? Is that how they are trying to rebuild public trust? Is that how they are trying to avoid conflicts of interest? The answer is rather obvious.

Aside from the Prime Minister's troubling admiration for a Chinese government that suppresses human rights and freedom of expression, what concerns me the most is that the Liberal Party is trying to buy time. Why is it doing that? What is it hiding? I really do wonder.

The Liberals are more interested in protecting their chief of staff than actually getting to the bottom of this matter. The Conservatives are putting on a show. All we want have an independent inquiry give us the truth.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen** Mr. Speaker, if this member wants to attack the credibility of David Johnston, that is entirely her prerogative, but I think nobody said it better than Chantal Hébert, who said that, if she had the accomplishments of David Johnston and she lived to be 81 years old, she wouldn't give a darn about what Pierre Poilievre or anybody else said about her—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

● (1630)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member knows full well that he is not supposed to use the proper names of the members, so he can say “the member of the opposition”, “the Leader of the Opposition” or whatever he wants to do.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

Yes, I do not think that David Johnston should really care about what the Leader of the Opposition or any Bloc member says. I think that his record and his incredible accomplishments throughout his career, at 81 years old, speak for themselves. If people would like to challenge that, well, that is their prerogative.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not here to get down that rabbit hole on David Johnston, but I will make one thing clear: I do not recall anybody asking for a special rapporteur.

The hon. member suggests that it is our decision, but they have a decision they can make. They can call a public inquiry. They can allow an independent body to dig into this. They can have the Prime Minister commit to testifying at committee, if they believe in prime ministerial accountability, or they can have Telford testify.

Those three choices have been put on the table at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. What will the government do and what will the hon. member have to say when this comes up tomorrow?

He had the choice, yet they chose not to take this action and instead appointed the special rapporteur that nobody in the House asked for.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not recall seeing the member at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. If he had been there, he would have heard various experts coming forward, including Conservative supporters and the national security experts, basically everybody. There was not a single expert who came forward and said that the best place to discuss national security is in a public inquiry. It did not happen.

To the member's point, yes, there will be a very important decision for the NDP members to make tomorrow. It is entirely up to them, but I would refer him back to his House leader, who actually said in that committee that staff should not be called before committee and that the only people who should be called before committee, as it relates to the political arm of government, are ministers.

**Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a little intimidating to follow the convincing fire and brimstone of my hon. colleague.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

There is a point of order.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I said I was sharing my time, but I just want it to be known I was just the opening act for the member for Yukon.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is descending into a bit of debate. I just want to make sure everybody is ready.

The hon. member for Yukon has the floor.

**Mr. Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I will add my thoughts on this important matter of election interference and its potential impact on Canada's democracy, a democracy thousands of Canadians have literally died for, and which many around the world look upon with envy and admiration.

What I would like to do in the next few minutes is reflect the voices of my constituents on this matter, combined with my own thoughts on what our government has achieved so far to tackle this complex threat and what steps lie ahead of us.

In so doing, I would like to take the temperature down a few notches as I am certainly feeling the heat in the House. This is an issue we should debate vigorously and, through parliamentary process, find a way to restore and maintain Canadians' trust in our democracy and in our democratic institutions. This is no time for scoring partisan points, and Canadians have little appetite for such political sport.

Indeed, I cannot help but reflect on the recent words of our departing member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, who urged us to come to the House every day with a firm intention of showing respect for our colleagues and for this extraordinary place.

We know that foreign actors in particular, but not exclusively the People's Republic of China, have attempted to interfere in the last two federal elections and may well be targeting other levels of government as well. Many Canadians and many in this chamber, myself included, were deeply disturbed by recent and various allegations of attempted interference.

Even more disturbing are the allegations that these efforts at interference may have had an impact, despite the reassuring evidence that the outcome of our elections has not been affected. These allegations have left parliamentarians and Canadians with questions and concerns, questions arising not just among us but also from constituents, as I am sure most of my colleagues are receiving.

*Business of Supply*

In following the reportage and discussions over the last few weeks, one of the most important subjects has been the need to distinguish between intelligence and evidence. Thus, what we are hearing about election interference is based largely on intelligence-derived information.

Evidence to form the basis for response to and against interference requires more than the threads of information that intelligence provides. It is therefore imperative to underline both that these threads are for alleged incidents and that the pieces of intelligence chosen to back them may not be providing a full picture. Nevertheless, the allegations are serious and disturbing, and they oblige us as a government to ensure we are taking the necessary steps to keep our institutions and our democracy, safe, trusted and secure.

When it comes to national security, we should remember and respect that answers to some questions must be kept confidential in order to protect the work of our security services and their sources. We must also continue to protect our relationships with Canada's allies, with whom we do, of course, share sensitive information.

Unquestionably, some questions can be answered. As we have already seen from the last two reports of the critical election incident public protocol and other recent work done by parliamentarians, civil servants and experts, it is clear changes must be considered to further strengthen our system and improve our response to these threats while providing as much transparency as possible to parliamentarians and the Canadian public. This is not, and should not be, a partisan issue.

I would venture that, when potentially explosive allegations are raised, we all may have a tendency to back into our partisan corners and raise our fists in defence. This is not helpful from any side of the House.

It is particularly disappointing to see shameful accusations of collaboration with Chinese officials directed at our leader, and such fear-based politicking must be called out. At the same time, we all have a responsibility to approach this issue with honesty and a commitment to do better where gaps in our protections still remain.

Surely, our ultimate goal is to unpack these allegations and understand where these are coming from and how we can continue to improve measures to protect the integrity of our democracy. After all, amidst purposeful innuendo and confusion, amidst Canadian politicians raising doubts about the integrity of our democracy or the loyalty of Canadians, the only entities that win are our various totalitarian adversaries outside our borders, which we know are looking for ways to promote uncertainty and undermine our institutions.

Although it was before my time in office, the government, much to its credit, has taken important steps to address these very national security issues in a secure and responsible manner while providing as much transparency as possible. NSICOP is one key institution, a group of up to 11 parliamentarians from both houses granted the necessary clearances to examine matters related to national security, and they have begun looking into this.

• (1635)

The critical election incident public protocol, a group of civil servants tasked with reporting to the public about elections and potential threats, recently published their report on the 2021 election and found that while attempts at interference were made they did not change the outcome of the election. The protocol made several recommendations to improve their effectiveness in addressing potential threats. I look forward to those changes being considered and implemented as quickly as reasonable.

In addition to the ongoing work surrounding these bodies, I was pleased to see the Right Hon. David Johnston, Canada's 28th Governor General, an eminent legal scholar and upstanding Canadian, appointed to examine the issue of foreign interference in our elections and to make recommendations on how to uphold or restore Canadians' confidence in those institutions.

The appointment of a non-partisan figure to examine this matter and to recommend appropriate next steps is critical, because we need to take partisanship out of the issue. I think it is incumbent on all of us to wait for Mr. Johnston to present his recommendations before assuming what he will or will not conclude.

As I have discussed with my constituents, though I have reservations, I am not opposed to some form of public inquiry or public engagement on some of the issues we are discussing, but I am mindful of the limitations of a public inquiry into issues related to security.

Once again, I would point to bodies and mechanisms like NSICOP, parliamentary committees and others, which exist to examine not only specific allegations but also the issue, risks and responses to foreign interference, more broadly.

In addition to Mr. Johnston's upcoming work, and that of NSICOP, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency is reviewing intelligence related to foreign interference, as assessed by Canada's security agencies, up to, during and following the last two elections.

The CEIPP report offers several recommendations that deserve consideration for implementation to make the process more transparent and make our democracy safer.

The debate we are having today reflects the work of several parliamentary committees. Committees should be the ideal bodies to select and to hear from witnesses and experts to inform recommendations for concrete steps to make Canadians safer.

*Business of Supply*

I believe committees are best suited to determine who they call as witnesses. Therefore, I am disappointed that we must hold a vote in the House on who to call. I will not be supporting this motion, as I feel this is the responsibility of the committees. Efforts to circumvent this process should be stopped so that the work of the committees in question and the work of the House could continue unimpeded.

While announcing the role Mr. Johnston would occupy, the Prime Minister also announced that the Minister of Public Safety would be launching long-awaited consultations on a foreign influence registry. These consultations will be completed in early May, and I hope they will be able to be legislated expeditiously.

I understand the frustration of victims of foreign interference and of those who are concerned about it. Section 11(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms grants every citizen the presumption of innocence until guilt is proven, and none of the present allegations come close to that. Canada has an unfortunate history where we have maligned, marginalized and persecuted people in the past, and questioned their loyalty based on where they come from.

In these recent storms of allegations, some have tended to get carried away and abandon due process based on fears stoked by irresponsible individuals. Too often in Canada's history, we learned that rash conclusions can bring devastating and long-lasting effects.

Let us take partisanship out of this issue. Let us commit to working co-operatively to respond to the situations. Canadians are expecting nothing less.

• (1640)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I get to my specific question, I do want to quote Sean McFate, *The New Rules of War*. He wrote, “Secrets and democracy are not compatible.... Democracy thrives in the light of information and transparency”.

My colleague spoke about the importance of transparency around that and about the needed action in taking the partisan rhetoric out of it. NSICOP's 2019 annual report to the Prime Minister was tabled here in the House in a redacted form, although the findings and recommendations under its 50 pages tied to foreign interference are all unredacted. It made three recommendations to the government and to the Prime Minister to take moving forward. The third one was something the same committee made to the government in its very first report to the Prime Minister on his trip to India, which was around the need to brief opposition MPs on foreign interference: read them in, get them the appropriate clearances and brief them.

I want to ask the member why this has not yet happened. It has been five years since it was first recommended to the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, again, we have processes in place. We have intelligence access through NSICOP and other bodies to access intelligence and confidential briefings. These processes are in place, and I welcome further recommendations from our special rapporteur when that takes place.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague said at one point in his speech that a non-partisan individual had been selected. He was of course referring to Mr. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston is a member of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. He has a cottage next to the Prime Minister's. He is a family friend. He is a close personal friend of the Prime Minister, a friend since childhood.

Can anyone seriously try to tell us that Mr. Johnston is truly a non-partisan person?

**Mr. Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I would point out that Mr. Johnston's appointment is supported by a wide range of people.

[*English*]

The reputation of Mr. Johnston is above reproach, and we can be confident that he is perhaps the best choice that we could think of among all Canadians to give us an objective, non-partisan report.

• (1645)

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for a very thoughtful speech. I have the pleasure of serving with him on the health committee, so I am used to his logical and fair interventions. The member raises some interesting concepts that I would characterize as comprising the rule of law. Everybody in the House and Canadians like to use that phrase. We all believe in the rule of law. It is the foundation of our democracy.

The rule of law comprises a number of principles: the presumption of innocence; the burden of proof, as he who alleges must prove; the right to face one's accuser; the right to test evidence by cross-examination; the right to adjudication by an impartial adjudicator.

The allegations of foreign interference are very serious and ought to be taken very seriously, but it is important to situate them. What we have right now are anonymous sources of allegations of what might have happened. Given that, I wonder if my hon. colleague can tell us what he thinks would be the best way to proceed to ensure that we can get to the bottom of these serious allegations while respecting the cherished principles of the rule of law.

**Mr. Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I share the pleasure of working on the health committee with my hon. colleague, who always brings thoughtful questions and comments to committee.

This is complex. As I said in my discourse, there are limitations to what a public inquiry can reveal versus what can be discovered in a more secure environment such as NSICOP. Therefore, it is a question of addressing the complexity. I certainly will await the recommendations of Mr. Johnston, as the special rapporteur, to see in what additional ways we can reassure and restore confidence in our democratic institutions.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. 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 Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment; the hon. member for Vancouver East, Housing; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Climate Change.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to remind my colleagues to be careful with papers near the microphones, as it is bad for the interpreters' ears. They mentioned it during the last speech.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is a very good point. The microphones are on our desks. If papers or phones are put near the microphones, it gives the interpreters trouble.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

[English]

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Liberal members will be voting against the motion. It is not clear what NDP members will be doing, so I hope to convince them to support the motion with my speech.

The motion in front of us concerns all members of the House and all parties, including the NDP. In fact, as *The Globe and Mail* recently reported, former NDP MP Kennedy Stewart was the target of Beijing's interference in the Vancouver mayoral race.

Foreign interference is a serious threat. It is a national threat. It threatens our economy, social cohesion, long-term prosperity and the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadians. It threatens all parties and all candidates. That is the written assessment of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS. The people engaged in foreign interference are with the government of the People's Republic of China.

The PRC is interfering in our elections and in our candidate nominations through tactics like illegally and covertly funnelling money to political parties and candidates. That, too, is the assessment of CSIS. Both assessments, that foreign interference is a serious national threat and that the PRC is behind these threats, did not come to light because the government was transparent about what was going on. They came to light because brave public servants concerned about a serious national threat to the security of Canada decided to blow the whistle and to work with investigative journalists to make these assessments public.

They came to light through reports in *The Globe and Mail*, *Global News* and other news outlets, and all along the way the Prime Minister has refused to be accountable and to answer questions. Initially, he dismissed the news reports. When that did not work, he changed tactics. He suggested that critics were fomenting anti-Asian racism. He tried going after the whistle-blowers by suggesting that they were the real threat to national security. He tried obfuscation.

For example, last month, in response to a *Globe and Mail* story about how Beijing uses tactics like undeclared cash donations and illegally reimbursing donors, he said, "there are so many inaccura-

cies in those leaks". The next day, he backtracked and said that he was not referring to the *Globe and Mail* story but to comments made two months earlier by his national security adviser, Jody Thomas.

His office has tried to block the procedure and House affairs committee from further investigating this matter through a filibuster that goes on as we speak. When all of that did not work, he tried to bury the whole thing in process. He announced he is referring the matter to two government committees, and he is appointing an independent rapporteur to make recommendations about a public inquiry.

The Prime Minister has refused to answer basic questions. We still do not know the details of which candidates were targeted in the last two election campaigns and who exactly was involved. Most importantly, we do not know the answer to the following questions: What did the Prime Minister know? When did he know it? What did he do about it? Why is the Prime Minister so reluctant to release this information? Only the Prime Minister can authorize the release of this information. We need to know why he has been reluctant to release it and why he is not heeding the advice of intelligence experts to release it.

That brings us to the motion in front of us today. We need to hear from the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, and others enumerated in the motion. We need answers to questions, and here is why: Translating intelligence into evidence for a prosecution is often very difficult, but one tool governments can use when intelligence cannot be translated into evidence is sunlight and transparency. Sunlight and transparency would reveal the details of foreign interference threat activities, so that the Canadian public is made aware of these activities so that citizens, parties and candidates can make informed decisions about what is going on.

However, citizens, parties and candidates cannot make informed decisions if they do not know what is going on and if they do not know the details of foreign interference threat activities. They cannot make decisions about which donors and donations to reject or about which volunteers they will allow to work on their election campaigns if they do not know who exactly is involved with these foreign interference threat activities.



*Business of Supply*

• (1650)

This practice of using sunlight and transparency to counter malevolent threats from foreign actors is exactly what CSIS has been advising the Prime Minister to do. It is written right in its top secret briefing note that was released to the procedure and House affairs committee before Christmas. It is the best practice of the Five Eyes intelligence allies. It is why, last year, MI5 went public about a PRC agent in the U.K. Parliament, Christine Lee. MI5 informed the Speaker about this individual and the threat, and in turn, the Speaker emailed the entire House of Commons with this individual's name, identifying her as a security threat. Members took appropriate action, cut off contact with this individual, and the integrity of the U.K. Parliament was protected. Sunlight and transparency worked, and the integrity of U.K.'s democracy was ensured.

However, unlike the U.K. government, this government is failing to heed the advice of its intelligence experts, failing to be transparent and failing to use sunlight to ensure that the details of these threat activities are made public. For a government that came to office promising to heed the advice of experts, this is truly puzzling.

We need answers now. We cannot wait for a year or more of a public inquiry before we get answers. We need to know before the next election so that parties and candidates can be equipped with the facts to protect themselves against the kind of foreign interference that we saw in the last two election campaigns. That is why this motion today should be adopted by the House. Then Katie Telford and the others enumerated in the motion would be called in front of committee to testify, give answers and tell us exactly what is going on so we can protect ourselves from foreign interference.

Some have suggested that, by raising the issue of Beijing's foreign interference, we are somehow fomenting anti-Asian racism. This is a facile argument, and I say that as someone who knows what it is like to be the target of anti-Asian racism.

I was born in this country in 1971 with the last name Chong to a Chinese immigrant father. This was a time in our country's history when there were not very many non-whites in this country, and when we had only recently opened up our immigrant system to non-whites. Attitudes regarding Canadians of non-white origins were very different than they are today. Therefore, I take exception when the Prime Minister suggests that those asking legitimate questions about Beijing's foreign interference in our democracy are somehow responsible for fomenting anti-Asian racism. Frankly, as the first MP of Chinese descent elected to the House of Commons from the province of Ontario, it is beyond the pale.

It is bigots who are responsible for fomenting anti-Asian racism, not those who, in good faith, are raising real concerns about Beijing's meddling in our democracy. It is bigots who are taking advantage of Beijing's threats to our democracy to foment this anti-Asian racism, just like they did when the global pandemic was under way.

We must counter both anti-Asian racism and the very real threats that Beijing is presenting to our cherished democracy. To do one and not the other is either to abandon our fellow Canadians to racism or it is to ignore the very real threat that Beijing presents to this democracy that we all own. We cannot allow either anti-Asian racism or Beijing's threats to our democracy to stand.

I will close by saying this: CSIS has assessed that Beijing's interference in our democracy is a serious national threat. It is for that reason that I implore all members of the House, particularly members of the NDP, to vote for this motion so we can get to the bottom of this matter and shed some light on what exactly is going on.

• (1655)

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of partisan jabbing back and forth, but I do want to ask a sincere question.

The member mentioned MI5. That security intelligence agency, on the basis of information that must have become overwhelming, made a decision to go to the Speaker of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom to present those allegations moving forward. However, we talked a little bit today about the idea of evidence and intelligence gathering and actual strong, demonstrable evidence that something is indeed true. I am curious, because the member is quite involved in these types of matters in Canada, what that process would look like.

Is CSIS allowed to perhaps come to the Speaker of this House of Commons and be able to do that if, on a balance probabilities, it felt the evidence was strong enough that it could do what happened in the United Kingdom? If not, is that something the member would perhaps like to see moving forward, or perhaps something the special rapporteur could recommend for all of us as parliamentarians to make sure that those agencies have that ability, without undermining the intelligence work that goes on, to actually gather the said information?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Speaker, there is a great BBC article on the case of Christine Lee, dated July 19, 2022, entitled, "Why did MI5 name Christine Lee as an 'agent of influence'?" I encourage the member and others to read that article because it explains the tactics behind MI5 going public with this information.

*Business of Supply*

To answer his question, at the end of the day, CSIS cannot go public with any information to the Speaker of the House of Commons, to individual members of Parliament or to political parties or candidates without the express authorization of the Prime Minister. What has been happening is that the Prime Minister has refused to grant this authorization for CSIS to go public with the details of these foreign interference threat activities. That is why it is so critically important that we use the tools of this House and its committees to compel testimony from individuals like Ms. Telford and others and get them to answer questions about what exactly is going on. We can then heed the advice of Five Eyes intelligence experts to use sunlight and transparency to publicly reveal the details of what is going on.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I recently met with researchers from the Université de Sherbrooke who have been working on the issues of cyber-violence and cybercrime. They informed me that Canada is lagging behind Europe and Australia on this issue. That is what concerns me. This is not about political partisanship. These academic researchers have done some serious research, and they were sounding the alarm by warning me of the dangers.

That being said, I am concerned that a study with so many witnesses and so many meetings is just a way to try to cloud the issue. Let me explain. I saw this when the Standing Committee on National Defence conducted a study on sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces. What the Liberals did was an affront to democracy. They filibustered to keep us from investigating sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces and producing a report.

We saw the same thing again last week. The Liberals filibustered so that we could not get to the bottom of the issue of Chinese interference. I am worried that they are trying to cloud the issue.

Why not simply propose an independent public inquiry and insist that the government respond to this request from all of the opposition parties?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I think that Beijing poses a real threat to our post-secondary institutions.

[*English*]

CSIS has identified that Beijing is a threat in five areas of research and development. It is a threat to our national security and a threat to our intellectual property in the five areas of clean tech, artificial intelligence, biopharma, 5G telecommunications and quantum computing. However, the government has failed to take action to protect the post-secondary research institutions that my hon. colleague referred to. It has failed to provide a directive ordering the CIHR, the CFI, the SSHRC and NSERC, the four granting councils, to ban funding in partnership with entities in the People's Republic of China in these five sensitive areas. That is why we have been lax in protecting our national security.

More broadly, the government has failed to step up when it comes to protecting the cybersecurity of Canadians. In the last election, we saw the case of candidate Kenny Chiu, who was the sub-

ject of a volume of disinformation that Global Affairs Canada's G7 rapid response mechanism was tracking. The SITE task force failed to release this disinformation during the election to ensure that Kenny Chiu at least had a fighting chance to counter it.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the House of Commons will see a very important vote. It is one that will show Canadians whether the New Democratic Party of Canada is an opposition party that believes in its role to hold the government, the Liberal Party, accountable for its actions, or if the NDP is just a sidekick to the Liberal government that will do whatever it can to uphold the government and support it in its cover-up of getting to the truth on the Beijing interference in our elections. That is what at stake with the vote tomorrow.

The stakes are so high, in fact, that just breaking on the news, there are whispers that the Liberals may make tomorrow a confidence vote. That is how desperate the government is to cover up the truth. That is the latest on the news. That may be happening tomorrow to force the NDP's hand. If the Liberals lose that vote, we will have an election in this country. That is how desperate the Liberals are to make sure we do not get to the truth. I implore the NDP to fulfill its duty as an opposition party and hold the Liberal government accountable, no matter what the consequences are tomorrow. That is what its duty to Canadians is. That is what its members were elected to do.

What are we debating today? In essence, it is a motion to compel a number of key government witnesses from the Liberals to come to committee, face accountability and be transparent on what they knew, what the Prime Minister knew, when he knew it and what he did or did not do about this political interference campaign from Beijing. The number one person on that list is the Prime Minister's long-time chief of staff, who is arguably one of the most powerful women in this country. Her name is Katie Telford.

Katie Telford has been the right-hand person to the Prime Minister since he started his political career. All through his election as a Liberal leader in 2013, and through his winning election campaigns in 2015, 2019 and 2021. She has been his ultimate gatekeeper, which is what a chief of staff is, for all of that time. She has been front and centre, a key operator, in every one of his election victories. As chief of staff, she would have had access to every top-level, classified briefing. She is the one who decides the political filter of messaging that goes out and the information that gets to the Prime Minister.

I cannot stress enough how important a chief of staff is to the Prime Minister. In fact, I think she has been the longest reigning chief of staff to a prime minister in Canadian history. It shows how influential she is and has been, both in the Liberal wins and within all the ongoings of the Liberal government in the last eight years. She has come to committee before on two occasions. It makes sense. She is such a powerful figure who is wielding so much power in our democracy. Sometimes she will have to come to committee, be held accountable and answer the questions of elected officials.

For some reason, the Liberals are so desperate to stop her from coming to committee that they may be threatening a confidence vote tomorrow. For weeks, they have blocked at the committee a motion to bring her forward. That is why we are here debating it because we were able to bring it to the House for official debate today and a vote tomorrow. It really begs the question why they are so desperate to keep her from coming to committee.

What does she know? What does she know that the Liberals do not want Canadians to know? If she is not hiding anything, there would be no problem. She has come to committee twice and frankly, left relatively unscathed. She is a smooth, intelligent operator. If she has got nothing to hide, she can easily come, fulfill her democratic duty to be held accountable as a powerful woman in this administration and answer our questions as the elected officials. It is not a lot to ask given what is at stake.

I would like to go over what we are talking about and why it is so important. Conservatives had been asking questions, particularly of the Prime Minister, for a number of months regarding election interference from Beijing. However, it was only about a month ago that *The Globe and Mail* and some of the most prominent journalists in the country, Robert Fife and Steven Chase, broke a groundbreaking story about leaked CSIS documents, which is our spy and intelligence service. It is basically Canada's equivalent of the CIA. There were leaked documents from it. Someone blew the whistle and gave this to Robert Fife and Steven Chase.

In those documents, they found that "China employed a sophisticated strategy to disrupt Canada's democracy in the 2021 federal election campaign as Chinese diplomats and their proxies backed the re-election of [the] Liberals". The article goes on to say, "Drawn from a series of CSIS intelligence-gather operations, the documents illustrate how an orchestrated machine was operating in Canada with two primary aims: to ensure that a minority Liberal government was returned in 2021, and that certain Conservative candidates identified by China were defeated."

• (1705)

This is what our head spy and intelligence service has written. It is fairly significant. We would think that the government would move heaven and earth to open the box and tell Canadians what it knows and what it has done about it, which amounts to really nothing at this point.

It goes on to say, "The classified reports viewed by *The Globe* reveal that China's former consul-general in Vancouver, Tong Xiaoling, boasted in 2021 about how she helped defeat two Conservative MPs."

### *Business of Supply*

We have a diplomat from Beijing bragging about how she helped defeat two of my colleagues, but the Liberal government says there will be no public inquiry. It says that we do not need that, and we do not need the powerful woman who was likely briefed about this to come forward and answer our questions. No, there is nothing to see here.

The article in *The Globe and Mail* also said:

Most important, the intelligence reports show that Beijing was determined that the Conservatives did not win. China employed disinformation campaigns and proxies connected to Chinese-Canadian organizations in Vancouver and the GTA...to voice opposition to the Conservatives and favour the [Prime Minister's] Liberals.

It went on to say:

CSIS also explained how Chinese diplomats conduct foreign interference operations in support of political candidates and elected officials. Tactics include undeclared cash donations [which are very illegal in Canada]...or having business owners hire international Chinese students and "assign them to volunteer in electoral campaigns on a full-time basis."

That is also very illegal, and these are clear violations of the democratic rules we have set for our elections.

Lastly, *The Globe and Mail* also reported:

China appears to have targeted [the Liberal Prime Minister] in a foreign influence operation after he became Liberal Leader in 2013, according to a national security source who said Beijing's plan involved donating a significant sum of money to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation.

Notably, that was \$200,000. More than that, the Trudeau Foundation has since returned the money. It has been a couple of years that it has had it, but now that we know all this information, the foundation has returned it. Still, there is nothing to see here and no need for a public inquiry or to engage in the committee process and have the chief of staff of the Prime Minister come to testify.

It is important that we acknowledge something in this debate: Why would Beijing want to go through all this effort to interfere in a civic election, as recently seen in reports on this impacting Vancouver, as well as provincially and federally? Why would China be doing all this work? It wants the Canadian government to be sympathetic and supportive of its various agendas, and some of them are extremely serious and counter to everything we believe as Canadians.

For example, China wants Canada to accept its claim on Taiwan to annex it by force. It also wants us to accept its draconian 2020 national security law on Hong Kong. It wants us to look the other way with what it is doing in Tibet and its militarization of the South China Sea and sweeping maritime claims in the region. China wants us to do nothing about the fact that it actively threatened Chinese Canadians on Canadian soil, using covert so-called police stations that are operating completely illegally and in violation of our sovereignty. If one does not pay any attention to that, it will help one get elected. At least, that is what is being reported; we could find out more about this if there were a public inquiry and we heard from the most powerful Liberal woman in the country, Katie Telford.

*Business of Supply*

I want to conclude with something I found quite moving. Recently, the person who blew the lid off this, who is the whistle-blower from CSIS, wrote in *The Globe and Mail*. I will conclude with a quote from him about why he would do this. Why would he risk his reputation and going to prison? It would be very severe, if it were ever revealed who he is, what would happen to him. He said:

When I first became aware of the significance of the threat posed by outside interference to our democratic institutions, I worked—as have many unnamed and tireless colleagues—to equip our leaders with the knowledge and the tools needed to take action against it. Months passed, and then years. The threat grew in urgency; serious action remained unforthcoming. I endeavoured, alone and with others, to raise concerns about this threat directly to those in a position to hold our top officials to account. Regrettably, those individuals were unable to do so.

In conclusion, he said:

In the time that passed, another federal election had come and gone, the threat of interference had grown, and it had become increasingly clear that no serious action was being considered. Worse still, evidence of senior public officials ignoring interference was beginning to mount.

Those are the words of a very patriotic Canadian. I applaud that individual for coming forward when nothing was being done, despite repeated alarms being sounded, by the Liberal government and by the hard-working CSIS individuals to inform them. I support this member, and I ask the NDP to do its duty and vote for our motion tomorrow.

● (1710)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it may be that the Green caucus is the only one here prepared to say it has not decided how it is going to vote. There are many good and compelling reasons to want some sunshine and daylight on this matter, but the part that makes me not want to vote for the motion is the excessive hyperbole and partisanship and some of the cheap shots at people like David Johnston and at the Trudeau Foundation, calling it Chinese-funded. This sort of thing drives away independent-minded and really committed Canadians.

Would the hon. member help me understand how we can approach this issue in committee without it becoming toxic?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the member and her style. I know it is quite different from that of some of the other members of the House, and I can respect that.

At committee, I too act as someone who brings people together. I do understand that. In fact, the opposition parties in many regards have worked together. However, when it comes down to the most important witness in Canada coming forward to tell us what she knows, one opposition party is not acting like an opposition party. It is acting like a sidekick to prop up a government that is trying to cover up what it knows, when it knew it and what it did or did not do about it.

On Mr. Johnston, I will say that certainly during his time as Governor General he was very well respected. He is an eminent Canadian in many ways. However, because part of this public inquiry would have to investigate what the Liberal leader knew, I do not believe this individual is the right choice if we look at his record. He is a member of the Trudeau Foundation, for example. He aids in appointing board members and crafting its bylaws. He was also the commissioner of the leaders' debates in 2019, which appointed the WE co-founder Craig Kielburger to the advisory board of that com-

mission. Also, under his leadership, CBC's Rosemary Barton was selected, and then she later sued the Conservative Party in that election.

I can go on and on, but I am certainly not taking anything away from his time as Governor General. By all accounts, he did an amazing job. Is he the right person to put the Prime Minister under immense scrutiny when he called him a lifelong friend? I would say no.

● (1715)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, despite months and months of railing against coalitions, now the Conservatives are asking for support from the NDP. However, I digress.

I want to emphasize that the NDP was the first party to openly come out and say a public inquiry is absolutely necessary. We were the first ones to push that. It was the Conservatives after that who said it would be great. It is not that we disagree that there absolutely needs to be a public inquiry.

We all know the dangers of misinformation. The member put a lot of emphasis on the rumours that this is a confidence vote. Does the member have documentation or proof that she could bring forward and table on this confidence vote, or is this simply meant to play into the hyperbole the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was mentioning before?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member opposite.

This is from the Canadian Press. It is a mainstream news headline: "Liberals float possibility of making motion on foreign interference a confidence vote". She can look that up herself and judge if she thinks the news is spreading misinformation or not.

I have an issue with the opening part of her question. She mentioned that the Conservatives are asking for the support of the NDP. It is not us asking for it. It is the Canadian people who care about upholding our democratic institutions. They deserve to know about this from the most powerful Liberal woman in the country, who was side by side with the Liberal Prime Minister for every single one of his election wins, who would have been briefed by CSIS multiple times about this and who would have held all the information for the Prime Minister and advised him on how to act.

The Conservatives should not have to ask the New Democrats to do the democratic duty they were elected to do on behalf of Canadians as an opposition party and hold the Liberals accountable. We are not asking them. It is their duty to Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are here to debate and shed light on something. The member is telling us that the government is going to turn this into a confidence vote. Quite honestly, I did not hear the Prime Minister or the government say that.

Is it not blackmail to put a gun to our heads and threaten the House with an election if we do not vote with the Conservatives? That is blackmail.

[English]

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Mr. Speaker, it is a sort of figurative gun to our head. We are going to vote either way, come hell or high water. We will go to an election any day. We welcome that, if that is what happens. If the government has lost the vote of this duly elected House of Commons, we will go to an election. That will not stop us, and I do not believe it will stop the Bloc, either, from voting to hold the Liberals accountable. That is why we are here. No one will hold a gun to our head, figuratively of course, on this. Rest assured that we will stand up here and vote tomorrow and do our duty to hold the Liberals accountable.

● (1720)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

I would like to start off by indicating something very clearly. When one thinks of foreign interference into elections, it is really important that we understand and appreciate that this is not something new. It is something that has been taking place for many years now. In fact, to try to give a false impression that the Government of Canada has not been taking actions on this particular issue is just wrong. There have been a number of actions this government has taken on this issue for years now.

If one were to contrast that to the Conservative Party, one would find that even today's leader of the Conservative Party of Canada chose to do nothing when he was the minister of democratic reform and at that time there was foreign interference into elections.

It is interesting listening to the member who spoke just prior to me, who talked about wanting Katie Telford before committee. Today's leader of the Conservative Party of Canada argued, a number of years ago, that it is about ministerial accountability and that the chief of staff, or the political people the member today called for to come before committee, should not be coming before committee; it should be the ministers. That is exactly what the current leader of the Conservative Party was arguing just a few years back while he was the minister.

As a government, to be crystal clear, we have been very much active on the issue of foreign interference into elections. I want to start off my comments by reading a quote, as others have done. This comes from a CTV News article, which reads:

The U.S. Ambassador to Canada says the question of whether or not foreign election interference is happening is less important than whether it's been successful, and he hasn't seen any proof that alleged interference attempts by China in Canada's elections have managed to affect the results.

David Cohen told CTV...in an interview airing Sunday, his many years of political experience have led to his developing a "certain level of skepticism and thick skin," and an "assumption" that both [and I want to emphasize this] China and Russia have been interfering in the elections of several countries [not just Canada] for years.

"I almost think it's not even worth asking the question about whether there's interference," he said. "I think the better question is: what is the interference targeting? Has it had any impact? Has it had any effect?"

"I've seen nothing that anyone's reported or that anyone has said that's been able to disclose any impact from any alleged interference by the Chinese in the last couple of Canadian elections.... I think the Chinese and the Russians have been at this for a long time," he also said.

People will ask why I am citing the American ambassador. Let us look at the type of accountability we have witnessed here in Canada on this very issue. Canadians and parliamentarians have already heard on this matter from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Communications Security Establishment, the national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister and the security and intelligence threats to elections task force, not to mention Elections Canada itself.

● (1725)

All the organizations I just listed off have testified that our elections were safe and that Canadians and Canadians alone determined their outcomes.

The Conservatives will cite certain things and are very selective in not including the many professionals, apolitical individuals, who have been clear that the outcome of the election was not impacted by foreign interference. The Conservatives know this, but they intentionally disregard it because they would rather ratchet up the rhetoric.

We have seen the rhetoric coming from the Conservatives. I would argue that they do it because this is an issue where they are more interested in raising money for their own coffers and using it as a fundraising tool. They do not have any solid ground for what they are arguing today. They say they want Katie Telford to come forward, but where was that argument when they were in government? Then, they argued for ministerial accountability, meaning that if we have something we want to question within a department, we can go to the minister. We have had a number of ministers appear as requested, and like the professional civil servants, they provided the necessary assurances to give a high level of comfort to Canadians, but that is not good enough.

It is interesting how the Conservatives like to mock the New Democrats. However, we can look at how the Conservatives have conned the Bloc, which has bought into what the Conservatives have been saying. In fact, they have even doubled down on the special rapporteur, who was appointed by Stephen Harper. He is an individual with impeccable credentials who fully understands what is at stake here. As members know, at least on the government side, and I would suggest and hope others, there is zero tolerance for foreign interference in elections. In investigating this matter, the special rapporteur can come back and say that there should be a public inquiry, and we will respect that.

*Business of Supply*

The government has gone out of its way to accommodate our best interests in protecting elections from foreign interference. As I pointed out, we have seen this in many measures the government has taken over the years. We witnessed professional civil servants, who are apolitical, come and make it very clear that there was no impact on the outcome of the election.

We should be looking at our electoral system as one of those sacred pillars of Canadian society. The politicization we have witnessed coming from the Conservatives on this issue, for the sake of being able to raise funds, I find disrespectful. Our democracy is worth more than a fundraising letter.

I see my time has expired. Hopefully, I will get a question to expand on that.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question, and I would ask my colleague to answer yes or no. It is a question so clear that even Stéphane Dion would be satisfied. Is the vote on this motion, which will take place tomorrow, a vote of confidence?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, it is a vote all of us should be taking very seriously. At the end of the day, I would argue there is a choice. Does the member believe in the civil servants and the security measures in place that provide assurances to Canadians? Does the member believe that the special rapporteur has the integrity to come back to give a recommendation?

We can at least wait until we see the recommendation, wait until we see the report. There is all sorts of opportunity, and I hope members will take it seriously.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my Bloc colleague had an exceptionally simple question. Instead of getting a simple answer, we got a word salad. Therefore, I will ask again. Is tomorrow's vote going to be a confidence vote? Yes or no is the only thing the member needs to answer.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I think the member needs to take a look in the mirror and reflect on what the Conservative Party is doing on the issue. The member previous said that it does not matter what anyone else does. The Conservative Party has taken a position, and it is a solid whipped position from the Conservative Party.

We do not need to take lectures on understanding and appreciating the importance of the vote. Canadians have indicated that this is a serious issue, and that is why we are treating it as that. It is a very serious issue.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in response to the question asked by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, the member asked if we believe in the measures that have been put into place since the events.

I would like to ask him if he believes in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS. It has approached the government

time and time again, and time and time again, the government has simply done nothing.

Does the member believe in CSIS?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I have a tremendous amount of respect for our civil service, which is why I listed off the many agencies and groups that are there to ensure Canadians can have confidence. They can have confidence because it is very clear that nothing ultimately impacted the outcome of the elections.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have two process questions for the member.

The actions of committees are independent. Should the House be involved in making decisions on who is invited, and where the committees do their work? There is also this place, a place of partisan debate, where we make points politically versus looking at the overall outcomes.

There is, in one case, an independent committee with its studies. In the other case, there is an independent inquiry into how democracy is being protected in Canada. How important it is to keep distinguished the different roles of the different groups within the House.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I am going to address the PROC committee, which is dealing with this. A lot depends on the makeup of the committee and the real agenda of the committee membership. I would have loved to have seen a committee that said, "Look, it is not only China. Russia and other countries are trying to have electoral interference here in Canada and in other countries".

As a committee, it could maybe conduct a more general study on such an important issue. I am sure that would go a long way in providing some wonderful recommendations for the future.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, often Liberal members get criticized for not answering questions. I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader the simple question for a third time.

NDP members last week supported the idea of having the Prime Minister's chief of staff and key witnesses testify in committee on what they knew and how they knew it when it came to Beijing's election interference. Suddenly, they are wavering. Can the member answer the question with a yes or a no? Have they made the vote tomorrow a confidence matter? For the third time, is it yes or no?

• (1735)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the member is obviously very curious. He might want to ask individuals in the House leadership. I am not the government whip. I would suggest that the vote tomorrow is going to be important.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to this important issue and debate the opposition motion. I would like to clarify a few things.

*Business of Supply*

It is clear that the outcome of the last federal election is not in question, and that there is no evidence that any individual races were decided solely on the basis of these allegations.

However, because of these allegations of interference in our democratic processes, we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to ensure that all proper protocols are in place. I cannot imagine that there is a single member of Parliament who does not take the issue of foreign interference in our democratic process seriously.

This is an important issue, but let me say this. The debates I heard today were not at all about the issue of interference and the best way forward for us as Canadian parliamentarians, but rather about partisan bickering.

[*English*]

Whether it is China, Russia, any other foreign actor state or otherwise that is seeking to influence outcomes in our democratic process, we should be alert and live to that reality. It is important to note that this issue is not new. In fact, it has been said quite credibly throughout the debates that this is something that had been raised over a decade ago by then CSIS head Richard Fadden, who was reporting at the time to then prime minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative government.

In fact, it has been noted that the now Leader of the Opposition was minister of democratic institutions at the time when some of these first allegations were brought forward. I want that not to be a partisan point but for Canadians to understand that this question is not just something that has arisen overnight. This is something that has been contemplated for, as I mentioned, over a decade now. It is also not a question that is just solely pertaining to Canada.

We heard the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills today talking about the United Kingdom and where MI5 alerted representatives in the House of Commons about a Chinese agent who was infiltrating in that manner. We know that in Australia and the United States, there are democracies around the world, where the People's Republic of China and its Communist regime is seeking to try to influence and obscure democratic processes.

The point is that this has been in the bailiwick for quite some time, and it is not just Canada alone that is dealing with these important questions.

[*Translation*]

I also want to point out that many of the comments made today, especially by the official opposition, treat unsubstantiated allegations as the gospel truth. I completely agree that now is the time to take as long as we need to strengthen our protocols and put in place measures to protect our institutions.

[*English*]

However, it is not the time to shoot from the hip, and I have heard that, without the proper information. Some of the insinuations that are being made today, frankly, in my view, are without basis. They actually add to the reality of driving discontent and sowing division in our society.

It is our job, all of us, indeed, to be asking these important questions, certainly the official opposition, other parties and other par-

liamentarians, including those on this side of the House, about what mechanisms we could have in place to protect our institutions. However, to make the insinuation that somehow this is a cover-up, that members of Parliament might be implicated, involved or somehow not loyal to their country that they swore an oath to, is problematic.

We need to bring down that level of rhetoric and stay focused on the facts and stay focused on the best process. We may disagree with that process, indeed I have heard it here today, but let us stay focused on that question before just driving partisan wedges in this debate.

• (1740)

To that point, there have been suggestions today in the House that somehow the government has not been transparent and that there have been no mechanisms to deal with this issue, which, as I just mentioned, has been fermenting in Canada for over a decade, starting with the former Conservative government. I would argue, respectfully, that this government has put more mechanisms in place to tackle what we knew to be true when Richard Fadden was raising these questions over a decade ago.

The fact that we are having a conversation today and that there are proper mechanisms allowing members of Parliament to be briefed is a good thing. It shows there is a strength in our democratic institutions, one of which is NSICOP. Secret security clearance has been given to members of Parliament to get the highest-level briefings there, meaning information sharing among all of the parties. There is the critical election incident public protocol, where senior civil servants, non-partisan civil servants, help preside and make sure that information is shared. That is another mechanism. We also have the security and intelligence threats to elections task force. This is where the RCMP, CSIS and other security agencies bring in information to provide intelligence about whether or not there are threats to our democratic process.

There is a recent focus on this topic and the fact that it is a pertinent question not just for China, I would argue, but for other countries. What is missing in part from the text of the Conservative motion today is that this is not just about China. There is a larger playing field here that I think we are missing, and that raises questions about what else can be done.

I thought the member for Yukon did a very good job in his remarks of talking about the concept of intelligence versus the evidence to prosecute. There can be intelligence sharing and information gathering that suggest a certain outcome, but there is a certain threshold that one must meet in order to prosecute that evidence.

*Business of Supply*

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills gave the example of the United Kingdom. MI5 would have worked with parliamentarians in that government, and they felt it was absolutely necessary to notify the Speaker of the House. That same member, today in the House, insinuated that indeed CSIS was at that nexus with this government. What I did not have a chance to ask him about in a supplementary question was how he is alleging that to be the case. What information does he have to suggest that this is what is happening? We have a protocol in place where this information can be shared, similar to what is happening in the United Kingdom.

I certainly appreciate that we have heard allegations and heard reports that I think are important for driving the conversation about what more we can do as parliamentarians. I have read the Globe and Mail op-ed myself, with the individual in question who has “whistle-blown” or shared information and the rationale for doing so. However, as mentioned by the member for Winnipeg North, the head of the security task force to the Prime Minister appeared before committee. We have had ministers. We have had other civil servants. It is not clear to me that the view reflected in The Globe and Mail necessarily reflects the entire view of the agencies we are talking about here today. It is a leap to suggest that one individual somehow represents the entire view of the security apparatus in this country. We need to be very careful about making that jump on the basis of information. Is the information about the allegation serious? Absolutely. Should we be continuing to do work? Yes. That is exactly why we have appointed a special rapporteur.

We had two weeks back in our ridings, and I was very disappointed to see the way the Conservatives attacked the integrity of a really genuine Canadian who has served in public service. They could have said they would prefer a public inquiry and that they trust the judgment of Mr. Johnston but are concerned that some of his relationships could create a reasonable apprehension of bias. However, no, it was a character assassination. There is no polish to the way the Conservative Party goes about this.

This was a Governor General appointed under Stephen Harper. This is an individual who has served in multiple different roles for different parties that have been in government. I trust this individual. Whether it is a public inquiry or another mechanism, this individual has such a high level of integrity that we as parliamentarians can trust it. Instead, the opposition wants to burn it down.

• (1745)

I look forward to taking questions on this. This is a serious matter, and I will stand ready for those questions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague and congratulating him on his impeccable French on this International Day of La Francophonie. However, that is as far as I will go with my thanks and congratulations, because I have some thoughts I want to share with him.

He is quite right in saying that we need to do our best to put partisanship aside when it comes to matters of integrity and ethics, and especially when it comes to our electoral system and the confidence we must have in it.

The facts speak for themselves. When the first rumours began to circulate about the Beijing regime's possible interference in the federal election, the Prime Minister always said that there was never any interference. When The Globe and Mail ran a first-page story saying that there had been interference, he asked how that information had been leaked to the media. That is a classic example of shooting the messenger rather than listening to the message.

Finally, after changing his mind three times, the Prime Minister decided to appoint a special rapporteur, which confirmed that there had indeed been unacceptable foreign interference. It makes no difference whether there was foreign interference affecting just one vote or an entire government.

Can the member acknowledge that his leader failed to lead by example and assume the responsibilities and authority of the office he holds, which is to be the Prime Minister of all Canadians?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I thank my opposition colleague for the question and his mini speech.

I will answer with facts. Today's debate and the process under way in the two House committees are very important for finding answers. We need to investigate and find answers so we can restore public confidence in our institutions. When the government receives the report from the special rapporteur, it will act on the recommendations.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I also like to thank my colleague and congratulate him on his excellent French on this International Day of La Francophonie. That is definitely something that needs to be highlighted.

He began his remarks by saying that his words would be extremely clear. I am going to ask him the question that I asked his colleague. I felt that my question was very clear, but I did not receive a clear answer.

Is the vote a vote of confidence, yes or no?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, again, I thank my colleague from the opposition for his question.

I am flattered that my hon. colleague thinks that I am in a position to decide with the government and the government House leader which votes are confidence votes. I do not know what the outcome of the vote will be tomorrow, but I am against the motion for a number of reasons, as I explained in my speech. I am very—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry to interrupt the member, but I must give others the opportunity to participate. Normally, the time given for the answer corresponds to the time it took to ask the question.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

[*English*]

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise on behalf of the good folks of Elmwood—Transcona to ask a question of my colleague.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!



*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate all the positive response for Elmwood—Transcona in the chamber here today.

I want to say, first of all, that I agree with the member that the kind of partisan circus that has developed around this issue on Parliament Hill has not been helpful for getting to the bottom of the issue that Canadians are rightfully concerned about and deserve answers to. The best way to do that is through a public inquiry. There is no question about it.

That is why the NDP was actually the first party to call for a public inquiry. It is why we continue to call for a public inquiry. If his concern is the political temperature in this place and that this is not the appropriate forum to get to the bottom of these things, why is it the case that he and his government have not already called a public inquiry, and when are they going to do it?

● (1750)

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I can answer the question to my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona.

I support the idea of going through processes and perhaps including a public inquiry, but let us work our way up to that process. We have two committees that are studying this issue right now. The government has appointed a special rapporteur who is going to look into this and perhaps even provide terms of reference for what could be a public inquiry moving forward. There are already mechanisms at play. Let us let that work itself out. If we need to have a public inquiry moving forward, we can do so, but let us let the existing processes work themselves through.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today. I appreciate the enthusiasm from members opposite to hear from me on this important opposition day motion. The motion is to have the Prime Minister's chief of staff testify at a parliamentary committee on what she knew and when she knew it with respect to the foreign interference efforts by the Communist dictatorship in Beijing on our elections, specifically in 2019 and 2021.

We have the opportunity, as parliamentarians, to investigate matters like this in our committees. The procedure and House affairs committee had undertaken a study specifically on this issue. The ethics committee also initiated a set of hearings on foreign interference. That process was under way before we heard all the explosive details that we are now privy to.

At the procedure and House affairs committee, the government is engaged in a full-blown filibuster cover-up. It has been going on for nearly 24 hours, and anyone who has watched it has been subjected to anything but dealing with the substantive matter. Canadians have reached out to me. I have heard from them, and they are looking for answers.

We know the Prime Minister's chief of staff was named by members of our intelligence community as having received the information with respect to foreign interference attempts. However, that is a departure from what we have heard from the Prime Minister as to what he knew and what individuals in his office knew. Therefore, it is important that we hear from this key witness.

Filibustering, obstructing and engaging in cover-ups are parts of a pattern for the Liberal government. We have seen it time and time again, notably with the SNC-Lavalin scandal. At that time, The Globe and Mail made allegations with respect to the Prime Minister's attempts to interfere in the criminal prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin. Interestingly, the Prime Minister said the allegations were false. It was later confirmed by an officer of Parliament, the Ethics Commissioner, that the Prime Minister had, in fact, been found guilty of breaking the Act for his interference in the criminal prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin. This was confirmed in the Trudeau II Report.

We saw the same obstruction with the investigation into the WE Charity debacle, where the government tried to give \$912 million, nearly a billion dollars, to friends of the Prime Minister. It did this instead of actually delivering on services and supports to Canadians at a time when they needed it most. This is the Liberals' pattern, and so we are not surprised to see that first they deny, then they deflect and then they try to cover it up. We are witnessing the cover-up as it unfolds.

On the matter of why Mrs. Telford, the chief of staff to the Prime Minister, will not come to committee, the Liberals have said she cannot come because we have ministerial accountability. Therefore, that staff member should not come, and it should be the minister who comes. However, the minister is the Prime Minister. In the 24-hour filibuster that we have endured, we have not heard an amendment proposing that the Prime Minister come to committee. What we know is that the chief of staff has come to committee twice before. This was on the WE Charity scandal and the hearings on the sexual misconduct in the military at the defence committee.

We know the chief of staff can come to committee, and Canadians can judge for themselves the quality of the appearances by Ms. Telford. She is a professional, and she is able to handle herself well at committee. We would imagine the same would happen again.

● (1755)

What is different this time? What information is the Prime Minister's chief of staff unable to share with Canadians that would be so damaging to the government that it is pulling out all the stops, up to and including potentially declaring an opposition day motion a matter of confidence in the government so that it can strong-arm the fourth party in the House into supporting it? That is the big question that we are faced with.

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We know that the Liberal government is going to obstruct and to continue its cover-up. What we do not know is what the Liberals' coalition partners in the NDP are prepared to do. Are they going to provide that transparency for Canadians on a matter that speaks to the fundamental, foundational principles of our democracy, that it is Canadians at the ballot box who decide the makeup of Canada's Parliament? Or are we about to witness a cover-up of state actors, in this case the Communist dictatorship in Beijing, putting their thumb on the scale to try to elect preferred candidates to engineer an outcome? In this case, there were reports that they were looking for the return of a minority Liberal government.

Frankly, that a diplomat from another country would make that claim on Canadian soil should precipitate a response from the government, and that response should be to expel the diplomat, to kick them out. When someone is bragging about interfering in our democracy, we do not need to substantiate the claim first. They do not get to pass "go" and collect \$200. They are declared *persona non grata*, PNG, and off they go, back to the dictatorship in Beijing.

We have not seen that kind of action in the face of incredibly concerning reports in *The Globe and Mail* and in *Global News*, with intelligence sources who have laid out for us what we need to be looking at. The response from the government is that now it says it is taking it seriously. However, the Liberals' actions do not demonstrate that they have been serious about it up to this point.

The Prime Minister is hedging his bets. He has named an individual who has the ability, we are told, to advise the Prime Minister on whether he should or could have a public inquiry. However, the Prime Minister describes the individual he chose as his adviser as a close personal and family friend and as a member of the Beijing-funded Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, which returned a contribution of \$200,000, that we know about, back to the dictatorship in Beijing.

Are they telling me that with 38 million people in this country, the Prime Minister could not find someone whom he does not call a close personal friend and who does not sit on his family's foundation? Canadians deserve to have transparency and they need to have confidence in the process that is set up. An open, transparent public inquiry is what opposition parties are looking for, and having the Prime Minister's chief of staff, who is named in these intelligence reports, testify at committee is essential.

We know the government is going to vote against the motion, and I know I am going to get a question from the fourth party. In that question, I hope to hear from them that they are planning to vote in favour of having Ms. Telford testify at committee and vote to end this Liberal cover-up.

• (1800)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have heard Conservative members talk about and try to defame the reputation of David Johnston.

Fred DeLorey, the former campaign manager for the Conservatives, was on a panel recently. I found it interesting. He said that, back when they appointed David Johnston as Governor General

and to various different positions, he was accused of being too close to Conservatives. Now I am hearing Conservatives say he is too close to Liberals.

I am wondering if the member could comment on whether or not he thinks that David Johnston, despite his connections to anybody, has the ability to properly execute the role he has been put in charge of, regardless of the fact that he happened to live on a street that somebody grew up on, that Stephen Harper happened to appoint him as governor general, or that Stephen Harper happened to appoint him as head of an inquiry back in the day.

Does the member think that David Johnston has the ability to be impartial and to do that job to the best of his ability?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, the problem is that Canadians are going to question the appointee because the Prime Minister has said that this individual is a close friend of his. The problem is that the appointee sits on a foundation that has the same name as the Prime Minister.

It is the appearance of the conflict of interest that is going to cause Canadians to doubt the integrity of that process. It taints everything downstream from it.

That is why an independent, transparent public inquiry is important, and that is why we need to hear from Katie Telford at committee.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, contrary to what the Liberals believe, we do not wish to call into question Mr. Johnston's competence. It is more about trying to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest and to demonstrate that, as elected members, we take this issue seriously and we are trying to restore the trust of people who have questions about China's interference. It is a serious matter.

As my colleague just explained, to demonstrate that this is a serious matter, the partisanship must stop. This is an urgent matter, and the time for committee meetings has passed, since they would unfortunately be drawn out and filibustered by the Liberals. That is what they did at the Standing Committee on National Defence to try to avoid an investigation into assault in the armed forces. That is what I am concerned about.

To expedite the process, perhaps we do not need a committee that is going to draw things out. Instead, we should immediately establish—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We need to give the hon. member time to answer the question.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, acting with a sense of urgency is very important. I agree wholeheartedly.

*Business of Supply*

That is why the call for an immediate, transparent public inquiry was made. That is also why the issue was to have already had Ms. Telford testify a week ago, not to continue a filibuster over the course of four weeks and not to then have this supply day used to address this issue as well. It already could have occurred, but the government is intent on covering up what it believes is too damning for Canadians to hear.

We should move quickly with it, and all parties in the House, including backbenchers on the government side, should support having the Prime Minister's chief of staff testify at committee.

• (1805)

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to make sure the facts are correct.

It is important that Canadians understand this. It was New Democrats who tabled the motion in committee to ensure there was a public, independent inquiry. Conservatives, after much delay, finally agreed, but they agreed only with the exception of removing foreign interference like that of Russia, like that of rich oligarchs, like Putin and his cronies. The Conservatives protected them. They are protecting them now because they would not address the reality that foreign interference is by many state actors.

Would the member comment on foreign interference of other countries, and whether he thinks that is important?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, foreign interference by any country in our democratic institutions is absolutely unacceptable. When we have credible reports about it, as we have seen in this case in *The Globe and Mail* and in *Global News* about the communist dictatorship in Beijing, it should call for swift action. We have case-in-point evidence in this case, and that is why we are calling for this motion to be passed and for the Prime Minister's chief of—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry has the floor.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there was a time when a future prime minister said, “It's hard not to feel disappointed in your government when every day there is a new scandal.”

When the Prime Minister took power, he proclaimed, “Government and its information must be open by default. Simply put, it is time to shine more light on government to make sure it remains focused on the people it was created to serve – you.”

From the floor of the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said, “I believe in sunny ways.... I believe that sunshine is the best disinfectant. Openness and transparency is what Canadians expect. That is what we will always stand for.”

After eight years, what a fall from grace there has been.

Here we are on the floor of the House of Commons with the final speech of the night. However, instead of keeping to the words the current Prime Minister said, there have been 24 hours of filibuster in committee, including 12 hours last Tuesday, where Liberal members, instead of calling the question and doing any sort of study in public, read from books, clapped at each other and joked about the

type of coffee they were sipping. They drew the clock out for 12 hours straight, instead of studying something Canadians want answers to.

It is important to remember here tonight why we are having this debate. It is not because the Prime Minister and the Liberal government were forthcoming with Canadians. It is because a brave whistle-blower came forward to expose bombshell revelations about the magnitude and extent of the interference attempts by the Communist Party of China. The worst part is not the magnitude and extent of all that interference on Beijing's part, but the bombshell revelations that it was the Prime Minister and those at the PMO who covered up the truth.

When they found out about it, they did nothing because it was helping their political interests. When it came to that topic, they swept it under the rug. We owe that whistle-blower a great deal of gratitude as we have the floor asking for more information and testimony from the government. That is why we need to have Katie Telford, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, appear at committee.

We get a lot of fake outrage from the other side, from the Liberals, because they say this is unprecedented and having chiefs of staff should not be allowed. However, chiefs of staff from both Conservative and Liberal governments have testified at committee before, especially when scandals brewed out of their offices. Katie Telford has already spoken twice at committee. She testified on the WE scandal and she testified on the sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and what the PMO knew, what it did and, more importantly, what it did not do to resolve that problem. So the question Canadians are asking now is this: Why is it suddenly a problem so she cannot testify?

With every passing hour of the filibuster, and with the opposition we have seen from the government in the House here today, the truth must be really bad to hear, which is what we can conclude. If Katie Telford had done everything great, if there were no problem and the PMO acted with full integrity, she should have no problem going to committee to defend her actions. However, the third time we want her to come forward, but now on this national scandal, about what she knew, what the PMO knew, what the Prime Minister knew, as well as when, how, and what they did, suddenly every roadblock goes up.

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Nobody believes that the Prime Minister was not aware of the magnitude and extent of the election interference by Beijing in the 2019 and 2021 elections. The solutions government members proposed today are to go back behind closed doors with no public inquiry, have a close family friend give advice behind closed doors on what we should or should not do, which he may do or not do. They want to continue to have a secret committee behind closed doors with reports that go directly to the Prime Minister instead of that sunlight we desperately need to see.

• (1810)

The Liberals and the PMO have lost the right to take this issue behind closed doors again. When they received the reports from our intelligence agencies about the magnitude and the extent, and because they knew it might hurt them, they avoided it, they swept it under the rug and they did nothing. They covered it up.

Tonight, as we wrap up the debate, it is equally important to talk about the issue and the need for support for this motion. We also need to rightfully call out the NDP for its lack of backbone in standing up and in supporting this resolution. The state of the NDP today is very sad to watch. Its members are unable to simply stand up for what is right. They propped up the Liberals originally, and then when the bombshells kept coming from the whistle-blower in the media, they said they supported it.

The NDP whip said, “Sadly, what we have seen in this country is a continuous leak from CSIS that tells us that there’s something serious that we need to be concerned with. And after that many leaks, I am persuaded that we now have to take a step that I am not necessarily...comfortable with, because it is imperative”. That was just a couple of weeks ago.

As the Liberals filibuster and hold up a vote and as we come to the floor and force a vote on this tomorrow, all of a sudden the NDP is wavering again.

I want to make a comment to the three million Canadians who voted for the NDP in the last election. No one voted for the NDP to allow this to happen, to cover up time and time again on multiple Liberal scandals. There is outrage and frustration from the millions who placed their faith in the NDP, and for it to suddenly start covering up and defending the Liberals time and time again is shameful.

The NDP can file amendments and do different things. A week ago, its members supported having Katie Telford at committee. They supported hearing this at committee, and all of a sudden they are wavering. Do not fall for their games. We can have a public inquiry. We can study other forms of election interference. The reason this—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I ask members to allow the hon. member speaking to finish his speech.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Madam Speaker, one would think I might be bothered by the heckling of the NDP members. They know they are in trouble. They are confirming what I just said, which is that Canadians believe their cover-up of the Liberals is continuing, and it is absolutely unacceptable.

We need this motion to pass, because the Liberals, PMO officials and the Prime Minister’s chief of staff need to be at committee answering questions on what they knew, when they knew it and when they hid it. The question tomorrow is whether the NDP is going to stand up for Canadians or prop up the Liberals again and cover up more of the now Liberal-NDP scandals.

• (1815)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division, please.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, March 21, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House on the lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples.

I am speaking today as a follow-up to a question that one might think was stale-dated, but it gives us an opportunity to pursue what was a remarkable success in Montreal at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is nice to be able to recognize the success of anything in this stage of a planet on fire and biodiversity in free fall. I raised this matter at the end of November, before the conference occurred, when I was asking if the Prime Minister would be able to raise the profile of this event and encourage other world leaders to come; that question is definitely stale-dated.

However, the results of what happened at COP15, which is titled the “Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework” after the city in China where this event was supposed to have happened, as well as the global goals for 2050, are worth taking the time to recognize right now. I am grateful that the parliamentary secretary is here for the adjournment discussion.

What did we accomplish? I will say, which I have not had a chance to say in this place, that the hon. Minister of Environment did a great job in negotiating and keeping some diplomatic heavy lifting going. This was a convention discussion where the cards that were dealt on this were not good; they were pretty bad. COP15 was supposed to have happened in September 2020. There were all the delays because of COVID, but the geopolitical cards were not good either.

At basically the last minute, in June 2022, Canada said to the People's Republic of China that clearly it did not have a place to host this right now. Montreal is the host city of the Secretariat for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, so Canada offered to step up and invite everybody here. When I say "last minute", six months may sound like a lot of time to people, but we know what it is like if we suddenly decide we are going to invite 30 friends for dinner at four o'clock in the afternoon, and they are due at seven o'clock. In UN terms, that is what we did.

The dynamic here was very challenging in that the People's Republic of China remained the host in the context of being in charge. It was, in UN terms, the president of the COP. This meant that our Minister of Environment was a physical host in Montreal. Again, I give credit to the Minister of Environment; he actually put himself into an interesting position and worked in a very unusual diplomatic, successful partnership with the minister of environment for the People's Republic of China.

What did we accomplish there? The goals are many and they are detailed. Today, I want to speak to today the 23 detailed targets. However, I am afraid that what we are going to see is the typical response out of Environment Canada: Here we go, our targets are 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Then it becomes a job of drawing lines on a map. The targets are not about lines on the map, which might even do a disservice to the targets of slashing pesticide use, reducing food waste and recognizing mother earth and indigenous sovereignty. These goals require far more transformational changes than lines on a map, where if an area is outside that line, it will be decimated. We need to focus and plan.

• (1820)

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend and hon. colleague for her compliments on the success of COP15, and I will certainly pass those on to the minister. This was a success for Canada and, indeed, the world. I think the hon. member will agree that the hard work begins now in implementing that framework.

As was correctly noted, China retained the presidency of COP15, while Canada provided the host location. Canada stepped up as the host location, doing in five months what normally takes two years to do, and sent a strong signal that we understand the urgency of mobilizing the world on this issue.

China, with the COP15 presidency, was responsible for working with the United Nations secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity to issue invitations to the high-level segment. This was a UN conference, as the hon. member referenced. It was Canada's conference, in terms of home field, and formally it was China that invited heads of state and governments to COP15 at its

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discretion. As a United Nations meeting, COP15 was open to all UN member states. All parties were formally invited to choose their representatives following an official notification from the CBD secretariat.

As the hon. member will know, the Prime Minister delivered remarks at the opening ceremony of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, COP15, and he highlighted the importance of protecting nature and biodiversity. He was engaged with key stakeholders. His participation on the ground sent a strong message that Canada is engaged and is leading by example in order to push for a clear, ambitious and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The high-level segment, which was always planned as a ministerial event, engaged ministers to help conclude negotiations and secure an ambitious outcome, and that is exactly what happened. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change served as the head of the Canadian delegation and had a very active role in the negotiations and at COP15 generally. In addition, several other cabinet ministers attended COP15 throughout the two weeks of negotiations, lending a strong message of Canadian political engagement and leadership.

To wrap up, I will highlight that the Prime Minister was active at COP15 and that Canada's expectations for an ambitious outcome were indeed realized at this landmark event. We are confident there is now clear recognition that nature is as important as climate and that the two crises must be tackled together.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Speaker, a lot was accomplished, as I said in my moment, but what I really want to focus on now is what is next. The question will remain: How do we recognize this language? The targets from Kunming-Montreal are truly transformative. This is the first UN document that has referenced mother earth; our relationship as humanity with mother earth; the leadership of indigenous peoples around the world; and the indigenization of our cultural approach, which has forever been, at least in industrialized modern society, exploitative, extractive and violent.

This is a call for a transformation of our values, a change in our industrial systems and a requirement that we do more in how we conduct agriculture, aquaculture and forestry and that we change our ways while we still have time.

• (1825)

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Madam Speaker, once again, I find myself in violent agreement with the hon. member, which is often unusual in the chamber.

I will just re-emphasize that the Government of Canada signalled commitment and resolve in the lead-up to COP15 through a series of statements and announcements centred around our progress toward conserving 30% of our land and waters by 2030, the protection and recovery of species at risk and partnerships with indigenous peoples and provincial and territorial governments.

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At the international level, leaders from Canada and many other countries underlined the importance of COP15 and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in recent months, including at G7, G20 and the UN General Assembly.

HOUSING

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on November 22, 2022, I asked the Liberal government if it would finally stop treating housing like a stock market and ensure every Canadian has access to safe, affordable and adequate housing as a basic human right. The Liberals talk a good game when it comes to solving the housing crisis, but they have failed to act. Costs remain out of control and the homelessness crisis continues to worsen as wealthy financial landlords line their pockets.

In Vancouver, the average one-bedroom apartment now costs \$2,640 per month. The CBC recently reported that one needs to earn \$109,000 a year in Vancouver to afford a one-bedroom rental unit. This is simply outrageous. However, it is not just people in big cities feeling the squeeze. Vacancy rates are dropping to all-time lows across the country. For example, in Prince Edward Island, the vacancy rate for bachelor apartments has fallen to zero. As more Canadians are struggling to find a place they can call home, the Liberal government is expecting Canadians to accept less when it must be doing more to tackle the crisis.

We desperately need more affordable housing, but the national housing strategy is missing the mark. The Auditor General's report released in November revealed that programs such as the national co-investment fund are failing to deliver affordable housing. I have heard from housing providers, community non-profit organizations and advocates that this flawed program desperately needs to be fixed.

The Auditor General's report revealed that the government spent billions developing unaffordable housing. The co-investment used an affordability measure tied to 80% of average market rent, resulting in housing that is unaffordable for many Canadians. Meanwhile, 115,000 units have received funding commitments through the fund, yet no money has flowed to the non-profits for this program. CMHC says the funding cannot be given to the non-profits until construction begins. This is yet another bureaucratic barrier for the non-profits trying to deliver affordable housing.

As projects sit on the shelf collecting dust, recent changes to the co-investment fund implemented by the government are jeopardizing affordable housing projects. Rising construction costs due to inflation and higher interest rates are adding to the financial burden of the non-profits. Rather than helping the non-profits in these challenging times, the government has reduced the funding available through the co-investment fund by implementing a \$25,000-per-unit cap on nonrepayable grant dollars. Prior to this change, organizations were eligible for up to 40% of total project costs. This is a huge cut for the non-profits, which will now need to find money elsewhere or, worse, abandon projects.

People say that projects go to CMHC to die. Sadly, the government is only proving this point. Community organizations are being told the fund has been depleted and will now have nowhere to turn for money. Non-profits intending to rely on the program were in-

formed of the changes at the last minute, leaving them with gaps in funding and putting their projects at risk. It is unacceptable.

The upcoming federal budget next week is an opportunity for the government to provide real investments into affordable housing and finally tackle the housing crisis. The government should do away with the \$25,000 limitation. It should not let these projects die that are desperately needed in our community. It should not let the efforts of the non-profits, which have been working so hard to provide housing, fail.

The ball is in the government's court.

• (1830)

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the question by my colleague from Vancouver East shows that we share a concern that people across this country still face challenges when it comes to housing affordability and homelessness.

Our government always welcomes input from across the way, across the housing sector and across the country on how to solve this complex problem. I would say it can only be solved through deep collaboration, and that is the approach we are taking. Our \$82-billion national housing strategy, the first of its kind in Canadian history, is built around partnership. We are not talking a good game. This is real action, and even more fundamentally, it is built on a rights-based approach to housing and an acknowledgement that everyone in Canada deserves a suitable home they can afford.

With this in mind, it prioritizes people made most vulnerable to housing need, and it is yielding real results. For example, the rapid housing initiative, one of the strategy's programs, specifically targets those most in need through the rapid creation of housing units. More than 2,500 homes for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of it have been built or are being built with funds from this initiative. These are 2,500 homes for people who need them when they need them most, and many of them are being built in my home community of Winnipeg.

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People like those who will stay in the new 20-unit building operated by Lookout Housing and Health Society in my colleague's riding of Vancouver East are benefiting. This is being built now with funding from the rapid housing initiative. Then there is the 24-unit facility, also in my colleague's riding, operated by Lu'ma Native Housing Society, which is providing supportive housing for indigenous residents. These are just a couple of examples from one program. They are repeated across the country and across the range of programs being delivered under the strategy.

These are concrete results we are proud of, and they serve to reveal the size of the problem and the fact that we still need to do more, as the hon. member has suggested. We are doing more. Our current budget includes a combination of new ideas and expansions of past successes, all supported by significant investments. We are approaching the issue of housing affordability from every angle that will have an impact, and in collaborating with partners across the housing system, we are finding new angles every day.

I thank my colleague for continuing to share our concern for housing affordability in this country.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association is calling for an additional \$4 billion per year over two years in the national housing co-investment fund. The funds must be used to build truly affordable housing, targeting core need, with rents no more than 30% of total income. The government must inject additional dollars into the program and lift the arbitrary \$25,000-per-unit cap on grants. We cannot afford to keep letting projects die at CMHC. The government needs to fix the co-investment fund and finally get to work on tackling this crisis.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned projects in my riding. Yes, a few projects did get through and I am glad for that, but I invite the parliamentary secretary to visit my riding to see the homeless encampments in the community and the number of people who are homeless and unhoused in the community. Those units are good but deficient, and more needs to be done; there is no question.

The government needs to fix the co-investment fund and get the funding in place for people who need a place to call home.

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Madam Speaker, our government has prioritized housing affordability throughout our mandate. It is why we launched the historic national housing strategy and why, in subsequent legislation, we enshrined housing as a human right. We continue to make housing a priority. We have enacted programs to help people from across the spectrum of housing need, always prioritizing those who are most vulnerable.

I would be very happy to visit the hon. member's riding. I have been to Vancouver East before, and I know there is great housing need there. We need to work together on all sides of the House to address that need.

• (1835)

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the chance to come back to the question I asked, after I returned from the most recent UN climate negotiations, on the fact that a credible climate plan must include plans to phase out oil and gas while supporting affected workers.

Today feels particularly appropriate to do so, given that international climate scientists have shared their most recent report, one that speaks to this being our last chance before the climate crisis becomes irreversible, and this being their last report before the goal to limit warming to 1.5°C is out of reach.

Here is the crux of it for Canada: If we want even a 50% chance of staying under 1.5°C in global average temperature rise, and if we were to do our fair share, then 86% of Canada's proven fossil fuel reserves need to remain unextracted.

It is a tall challenge, particularly for a country that has chosen to be so dependent on oil, but we can and should rise to it.

While the federal government is not turning a blind eye to this crisis, as carbon pricing is an example of an important measure that it has moved ahead with, in the words of Bill McKibben on climate, "Winning slowly is the same as losing".

For every positive measure, like putting a price on pollution, the government also continues to placate the oil and gas industry as if the science did not apply to it. It has been busy approving oil exploration permits off the coast of Newfoundland, looking for more oil, when we know that we need to leave the majority of our proven reserves untouched if we want a shot at rising to this crisis.

The government also brags about billions of dollars of investment in climate action, and we will no doubt hear this in the parliamentary secretary's remarks tonight, I expect, but so much of this so-called investment is in fact more subsidies to the very sector most responsible for the crisis, for example, in the form of a tax credit for a failed climate solution, so-called carbon capture and storage.

In my original question, I asked if this government was going to continue to hide behind the greed of the oil and gas industry. In the months since, it has only gotten worse.

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While it continues to push the federal government to give them billions, and last year's budget, for example, set aside \$8.6 billion of our money for the fairy tale known as carbon capture, the oil and gas industry continues to rake in record profits. The sixth-largest oil and gas company operating in Canada booked pure profit of more than \$35 billion dollars last year. These are the same companies that lied to us for decades about the climate crisis they helped cause.

In recent weeks, these companies have been telling Canadians and their MPs that they need more of our money to increase the carbon capture tax credit, money that could be invested in workers' livelihoods. If we are going to be honest, we do not need more of that.

What we need is a federal government willing to be clear with Canadians about this crisis and the urgent action required to address it. We could unite Canadians around this, investing in workers' livelihoods, in deeply affordable public transit and high-speed rail, in a zero-emissions electricity grid and in deep energy retrofits of buildings across the country, which would create well-paid, high-skill jobs and would return to public coffers \$2 to \$5 for every dollar spent.

My question for the parliamentary secretary, who I appreciate is here with us this evening, is this: Will she advocate in her caucus for these transformational investments, in place of more subsidies to the oil and gas industry, while the window of opportunity is still open?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I agree fully that climate change is a matter of tremendous urgency right now. That is why, in fact, we are taking action. I really liked hearing some of the ideas that the member opposite had because we are working on many of those. I will talk a little about that.

The member opposite mentioned the price on carbon pollution as one of the actions we have taken, and I do not think that we should actually undermine how important that is as a fundamental piece to action on climate change. It is a market-based solution, and it is effective. I see it in the decisions being made by industry, when I speak with people and they say that they look at the price on carbon pollution and they are deciding to change the way they heat their buildings or use energy in their districts, for example, in the university in my community. It is having a very real and tangible impact.

The other thing we did is legislating that we would be net-zero by 2050. To go along with that, we put out an emissions reduction plan that covers all sectors of our economy as to how we are going to reduce emissions. This includes working toward the green building strategy and reducing emissions from transportation. In fact, the member opposite mentioned public transit as being important. I am very happy that, with federal support, my city has the largest number of electric buses in all of North America.

Those are the types of things we are working on and supporting. It is about moving away from combustion and doing so quickly. That is our goal. We are working on that, as I have mentioned, looking across sectors of our economy.

Not only that, but we are also investing in clean energy. It is important that we have a clean electrical grid to support all these different forms that I am talking about. When we are talking about that, Canada already has one of the cleanest electrical grids in the world. We are really quite proud of it. It is an 84% clean electrical grid. That is something to be proud of. This also attracts investments to our country.

Let us talk for a second about that. We know that we need to get the other 16%, and that is something we are investing in. We are working with our provinces and territories to make sure that we do have that clean electrical grid to support a clean economy as we go forward.

I will also talk quickly about investments that are coming to our country because of the fact that we have a clean electric grid. When people look at our country, they see that we are making that commitment to have a net-zero economy.

One of the most recent ones that is very exciting is that Volkswagen decided to open a plant for battery cells here in Canada, the first one outside of Europe. It is being built here. That builds on other investments, such as Stellantis and LG, which are building a battery plant here in Canada. Once again, they are doing this to support the North American market.

Those are signals from around the world that people are looking at what we are doing here in Canada, seeing the investments we are making towards a clean economy and saying that this is where they want to build their parts for a clean energy transition. Not only that, but it is also creating well-paying jobs right here in our country. Those are the jobs that we are attracting and that we should be very proud of.

There are many parts to what we are talking about today. It is an urgent crisis, and we absolutely must take action. I also want to say that we are moving mountains in a lot of what we are doing, be it in reducing emissions from forums across all sectors or building a clean economy for the future with well-paying jobs.

● (1840)

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Speaker, I do not dispute for a second some of the investments that the federal government is making.

However, the reality is that by giving the oil and gas industry, for example, upwards of \$20 billion a year, those investments work at cross-purposes with what the parliamentary secretary just spoke about. They feed the lines of the opposition when they attack the carbon price. More importantly, the investments are insufficient to respond to the climate crisis in the closing window of opportunity we have.



Again, will the parliamentary secretary stand up to end the subsidies to oil and gas? If we want a truly renewable grid, according to the Green Budget Coalition, it would take about \$17 billion to do it, which is less than we currently give the oil and gas industry every single year.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Madam Speaker, we have unequivocally stated that we will end fossil fuel subsidies. We are working on that, as the member knows.

Beyond that, we need to focus not only on investments being made but also on legislated targets, like a sales target that we have

*Adjournment Proceedings*

put in place to have zero-emission vehicles by 2035, for all new vehicles sold. We are taking positive actions moving forward.

I would hope that the member opposite also focuses on that.

• (1845)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.)

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