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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### OFFICE OF THE TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSPERSON

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2023-24 annual report of the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson, entitled "Fair Access to Service".

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the 11th report of the the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities presented to the House on Tuesday, April 25, 2023, be concurred in.

I am rising in the House today because I want us to debate the report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on the impact of commercial shipping on shoreline erosion. I am rising today to talk about this issue because this report was tabled in the House about a year and a half ago, on April 25, 2023, and nothing has happened since. It has been radio silence. It is as though the committee never even wrote a report. Yes, there was a response from the government, and I will come back to that. However, people are still dealing with the same problem. Our shorelines are continuing to erode, and the government has not acknowledged that nor has it taken any further action.

The committee tabled a report in the House, but the response that it got was unsatisfactory, because nothing has been done. I figured that, if the House were to concur in this report, then we would be sending an even stronger message to the government that it is time to take action and consider the reality that people are facing on the ground.

I will therefore provide a brief history of events because, despite the government's failure to follow up on this report, the people on the ground continue to deal with erosion.

Why is reference made more specifically to erosion caused by commercial shipping? In the 1950s, the St. Lawrence Seaway was built to enable larger vessels to reach the Port of Montreal. As we know, ships have only gotten larger and they carry even more containers, petroleum and cargo. This is the way international shipping achieves economies of scale. Because the seaway was built to allow larger ships to pass through, the St. Lawrence River is no longer in its natural state. It is not the same river as it was 100 years ago.

Needless to say, bigger ships cause bigger waves, and the wake from passing vessels causes erosion, which little by little eats up people's land each year, so people started to protest a little. Although people could agree that increased river freight traffic creating economies of scale would boost the economy and be in the interest of regular folks who purchase these goods, there were negative consequences for some. Having recognized this in the 1960s and 1970s, the government set about building structures to protect against shoreline erosion caused by commercial shipping.

In the 1990s, as we know, the Liberals began making cuts everywhere. Wherever they could, they made cuts, cuts and more cuts. Among these cuts, the Liberal government of the day officially did away with the shoreline protection program in 1997, which means that for over 25 years now, the St. Lawrence shoreline has been completely neglected. Most of the structures built in the 1960s and 1970s are now over 50 years old. They have fallen into disrepair and are no longer effective.

In unprotected areas, erosion continues. In areas that have some protection, the structures are crumbling and are increasingly ineffective, if they even remain at all. In the 1990s and even before that, the government wrote a letter to shoreline residents, abdicating its responsibility. It told these residents that the protection structures it had built no longer came under its responsibility, and that henceforth it would be up to them to maintain their land, because the government would no longer be doing so.

*Routine Proceedings*

That is a bit odd given that it is the federal government that manages the waterway. It was the federal government that expanded the St. Lawrence River to allow boats to pass through. It is the federal government that regulates the St. Lawrence River and waterways in general. However, citizens are the ones who have to foot the bill. That is a bit of a problem. There are huge economic benefits to transporting goods on the St. Lawrence River. Between these efforts and this report being produced, no one, not even the citizens affected by this situation, are asking that boats no longer be allowed on the river. That is not the idea. The idea is that there are people who suffer the consequences, and they should be protected and compensated. They should not have to face the repercussions this transport has on their private property all by themselves.

• (1010)

The government acknowledged responsibility for changing the river, which is no longer in its natural state. The ships using the waterway are getting bigger and bigger, and they are affecting the shoreline. Even so, the government avoided taking responsibility and told the public that it wanted to save money by making them pay. The thing is, government scientists did not necessarily agree with the government.

Two scientists who worked at Environment and Climate Change Canada—federal government scientists—conducted a study in the 2000s. They studied 1,600 kilometres of shoreline from Cornwall, Ontario, to Montmagny, in the Lower St. Lawrence. They studied 1,600 kilometres of shoreline, which is a lot. They found that 70% of all the erosion between Cornwall and Montmagny occurred between Montreal and Sorel-Tracy. Worse still, 86% of erosion attributable to commercial ships occurred there as well. In other words, controlling for other factors, such as tides and winds, scientists found that 86% of all erosion caused by commercial shipping occurred between Montreal and Lake Saint-Pierre. That is serious. That is a big deal.

What is the explanation for this? It is fairly straightforward. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the river is wide. There is plenty of room. Ships can navigate without any problems or impact. However, approaching Montreal, the river gets narrower and shallower. Even though the river is narrower and there is less room to navigate, the ship does not get any smaller. It stays the same size. The ship's impact is far greater in places where the corridor is narrow than in places where it is wide and waves have time to subside before reaching the shoreline. In certain areas, the effect of the waves could even be said to be marginal, since there are so many other factors that have a far greater impact than vessel traffic. For the area between Montreal and Lake Saint-Pierre, however, the scientists' research and data are clear. The main erosion factor between Montreal and Sorel-Tracy is commercial shipping. That is significant.

This is the exact area where my riding is. The people of Verchères, Varennes and Contrecoeur suffer the consequences of this problem on a daily basis. They live with this all the time, and it is stressful for them. We conducted a survey, which some members of the public worked on as well, and it found that half of shoreline property owners in and around Verchères, Varennes and Contrecoeur are seeing serious erosion problems. This issue is affecting hundreds of people and causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in

damage. For these people, the stress is not only psychological but financial as well. As the protective infrastructure crumbles, it is taking land with it. Sometimes bits of land fall into the water, so people are afraid to walk along the edge of their property because the river might swallow it up. Holes are appearing all over their land. Some people even worry that their house will fall into the river. That is how bad the erosion is. Despite all of that, they are the ones who would have to pay for a fix. That does not sit well with me.

I was elected in 2015, but we really got down to work on this issue in 2017. Seven municipalities sent us resolutions calling on the federal government to acknowledge the situation and reinstate a shoreline protection program. We received support from the cities of Varennes, Verchères, Contrecoeur, Sorel-Tracy, Lavaltrie, Lanoraie, and Repentigny. All of these cities took a stand and insisted that the issue was important and urgent, that a problem existed locally, and that the program had to be reinstated. The letter was sent to Mr. Garneau, but despite media coverage, he simply never answered it. My constituents were pleased to see their MP taking charge of the issue, and these events whetted their appetite, leading them to wonder whether he could help them even more, so a short time later, in 2018, I wanted to find out where things stood. I decided to hold a town hall meeting.

We rented a hall in Verchères and it was filled to capacity, with no seats to spare. Over 150 people showed up and there were no empty chairs in sight. It was standing room only. Everyone agreed that this problem had to be solved. It is not a problem that I made up. When rooms are full to overflowing and people come together to support a cause, it is because they have problems that they want solved.

• (1015)

We therefore presented a petition to the House of Commons and formed a citizens' group that exists to this day. The group is working hard to raise public awareness of this issue. Our petition netted 2,300 signatures. When it was tabled in the House, we held a press conference. We were accompanied by elected officials, mayors and various groups.

The then transport minister, Marc Garneau, did not even respond to the petition. The House's rules state that the government has 45 days from the tabling of the petition to respond, but the minister never responded. I wrote to the Speaker of the House, but Mr. Garneau got off scot-free. The Speaker did not reprimand him because an election had been called, meaning that the minister was no longer required to respond to the petition. It was dead and buried.

*Routine Proceedings*

The election took place. Unfortunately for the Liberals, I was re-elected. The same minister was re-elected as well. This forced us to table another petition in February 2020. We also filed a notice of a motion in 2020 at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, calling for a study to be conducted on shoreline erosion, for the committee to hear witnesses and for people to be allowed to come talk about what they were experiencing. This time, we did hear back from the transport minister. It certainly took some time. Basically, he said that erosion was caused by several natural factors and that he was aware of the problem and was working hard on it. He never really saw the light, so to speak. We were told that they were aware of the problem but that they would not be doing anything more about it, that it was not caused solely by ships but by other factors as well. That is what they said, despite the scientific data I spoke of earlier.

By 2021, residents had had enough. They were really unhappy. They launched a \$50-million class action suit against the government, authorized by the Quebec Superior Court. When citizens take their government to court, things must be really serious. In February 2022, my motion for a proposed study was adopted by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. In the fall of 2022, we heard from witnesses, and they were unanimous. The experts, scientists, residents, cities and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative all agreed. It was not just experts from Quebec, by the way. The consensus included experts from Ontario as well.

Everyone agreed that it was Ottawa's responsibility to take care of this and to compensate people and protect them from damage, especially in areas where the erosion is mainly caused by shipping due to the channel being narrow.

In the spring of 2023, the committee's report was tabled in the House. Not only did all the witnesses who appeared before the committee agree unanimously, but all the parties seated around the table also agreed unanimously. The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities produced a unanimous report. I was pleased. I was really excited. I thought we had reached the goal and that Ottawa would finally get it. I thought the unanimous committee report would make something happen. Everyone was in agreement. This is not about partisan politics. These are facts, and it is about being sensitive to what people are going through.

There were six recommendations in the report. They were all very good, but I want to focus on one recommendation in particular. It is the most important one and reads as follows:

That the Government of Canada re-establish a shoreline protection program in areas of the St. Lawrence River where erosion is due in large part to shipping, in particular where the channel is narrow and more exposed to wake, in conjunction with provincial and municipal governments, Indigenous groups, industry and scientific experts.

It was the government that wanted to add that last part, after “wake”, but we can live with that. We have no problem working with other groups. What is important is that the federal government take the lead, since it has a responsibility to do so. That is what the motion said.

The report contains five other recommendations that are all very interesting. I will read them quickly.

The second and third recommendations state, “That the Government of Canada continue to invest in research that focusses on providing technical guidance to help assess best solutions to shoreline erosion” and “That the Government of Canada draw up an inventory of the areas affected by erosion along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Waterway”.

The fourth recommendation says, “That the Government of Canada support research aimed at finding the most appropriate way to protect the banks and to protect their ecosystems from damage caused by vessel traffic.”

The fifth recommendation says, “That the Government of Canada evaluate the effectiveness of current voluntary speed reduction measures for commercial vessels and consider applying them on a larger scale through formal regulations.”

The sixth recommendation says, “That the Government of Canada explore the possibility of setting up a fund for the restoration and enhancement of riparian environments affected by erosion that would be financed by the commercial users of the river corridor.”

Those are the committee's six recommendations and, as I said, the report was adopted unanimously.

- (1020)

What was the government's response? The government basically said that it was taking the six recommendations under advisement and would be getting back to us about what it was already doing. Which means it was thanking us for our work, it would not be listening to us and it was already taking action. What is it doing? There are some research projects here and there, and there has been a voluntary reduction in ship speed. Meanwhile, the people on the ground still have to contend with the problem.

The sad part is that things never change. People have been fighting this since the program was abolished, of course, but as far as I am concerned, I started in 2017, which means we have been fighting this battle for nearly eight or nine years and telling the government to listen to these people who have been living with a problem that the government itself recognized at the time. Why is it no longer able to recognize it now? Its reasons are shortsighted. It wants to save some money and pinch pennies at a time when people are in financial distress because it would cost them a fortune to repair their land. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars per landowner. It is unconscionable to expect a handful of people to bear the brunt of this entire problem.

They tell us the same thing all the time: The erosion is caused by multiple factors, they are working hard, it is a shared responsibility and so on. I am fine with the part about shared responsibility, but most of the problem is due to shipping, which is causing most of the erosion in this section of the river.

*Routine Proceedings*

It is not normal for citizens to have to drag their government to court in order to be heard. It is not normal that petitions must be tabled, citizens mobilized and resolutions adopted by municipalities and sent to the minister, nor is it normal that the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities issue a unanimous report only to see the government drag its feet. This is not normal. It is not normal for the government to dismiss reports prepared by its own scientists who are telling it that the problem is in its own backyard. It is not normal for Ottawa to wash its hands of its constitutional responsibilities. Commercial shipping and navigation in general comes under federal jurisdiction.

The government, however, says that it is not its job to take care of it. There is a problem. If it is not the government's job to take care of it, let it offload the responsibility to another government, or let us declare independence. Perhaps the Quebec government will take care of it, because as we can see, Ottawa is not interested in doing its job.

In conclusion, I expect the federal government to respect the people in my riding. I expect the study tabled by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, which was carried out in a serious way, with witnesses, and whose findings were unanimously accepted, to be acknowledged by the government and taken seriously. I expect the House of Commons to confirm the work done in committee so that it has more weight, so that the government really listens to what the people want and solves the problems happening on the ground. Most of all, I expect the government to implement the recommendations set out in the report. In my opinion, that is the starting point. I am totally baffled that this short-sighted government is trying to avoid taking the problem seriously.

However, I am still pleased, because there were Liberals on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities who heard the witnesses and what they had to say. They saw the facts, and they voted with the rest of the committee members. They understood that there was a problem that needed a solution. They agreed with the solutions that were proposed. If these Liberals agreed with the proposed solutions when they were in committee, I think they will be able to convince the government. If the government is really serious about the problem, it has no choice but to agree with the facts I have stated. It can only act responsibly, right?

The whole purpose of the House is to hold the government accountable for its actions and to highlight the everyday problems faced by our constituents.

We are doing our job. I can say that I am doing my job. Now it is up to the government across the aisle to do its job.

• (1025)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the St. Lawrence has been a critical issue for the government for many years. We have had studies at committee, and there have been a number of budgetary and legislative actions dealing with the St. Lawrence, at least in part.

This is a report that the member admits has been sitting on the Order Paper for 18 months. I cannot recall offhand, and I have been here for quite a few question periods, whether the Bloc has ever raised this issue in the form of a question during question period; the member can correct me if I am wrong, but I do not believe he has ever stood up and asked such a question. Why has the Bloc made the determination today to use this particular concurrence report? I guess it takes us off the Conservative filibustering, but I am curious as to what rationale was used 18 months ago when this report was tabled.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Liberal member mentioned this, because it will allow me to correct some misperceptions.

I did have the opportunity to ask questions about this subject in the House in oral question period, and I am fairly certain that the Liberal member was there because he has been a member of Parliament for a few years now.

With respect to the report, it is pretty simple. It was tabled 18 months ago. We expected the government to read the report, respond and take action. A year and a half later, we are starting to get impatient. Time is passing, and we are wondering what the government is doing.

Why not make sure that the message gets through by asking the House to vote? That is much more powerful than a vote in committee.

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is extremely interesting to note that it has been shown that we need to act now to protect the St. Lawrence shoreline. My colleague is absolutely right, and I share his opinion, just as I share his opinion concerning the urgent need to take action to protect the French language.

Yes, this is urgent, but why is the Bloc Québécois propping up the government, not calling for an election?

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Speaker, I would have preferred that my colleague ask a question about the report, since I am sure that some of his constituents, and certainly some Conservative members, live in areas along the St. Lawrence River. Some of these citizens surely would have liked to learn more about the situation and hear their member fight for it.

To get back to my colleague's more specific question, I think we have made it very clear, on numerous occasions, that our goal is not to work for the Liberals or the Conservatives, but for Quebeckers. Our goal is to make gains for Quebec.

If we can make gains for Quebec, we will try to do so. If, one day, we find that this is no longer possible, perhaps a government will fall.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his speech and for his advocacy on this. It is so important that we not only acknowledge but also actually reduce the impact of shipping on these important corridors.

My colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has also put forward a bill that would grant legal protections, rights of nature, to the St. Lawrence River. We are facing a climate emergency, which is having devastating impacts; we also know that human activity and other economic activity is having an impact on these areas.

Can the member speak to his support, or not, for the idea of granting rights to nature and to the St. Lawrence River?

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I have not seen my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie's bill. I have not read it, so it is hard for me to take a stand on it on the spur of the moment.

Nevertheless, I will take advantage of my colleague's comment to make something perfectly clear. Our goal is not to prohibit shipping, but rather to mitigate the impact of ships' passage so that citizens do not have to face this problem alone.

There are economic benefits. However, these economic benefits must come with some form of compensation or restitution for those who suffer harm. The environment is central to this issue. That is why it is important to do as much as possible to ensure that ships have as little adverse impact as possible.

There are many possibilities, including reducing speeds, re-designing hulls and keeping ships as far away from the shore as possible. There are many steps that could be taken, but I think this problem will require a complex, ongoing effort.

Unfortunately, despite all the efforts and attempts that have been made so far, there is one key measure that this government has failed to implement, and that is spending real money to protect the shoreline.

- (1030)

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his lessons in political science, history and how to be a good MP. I think they were all quite relevant.

There was one part of his speech that caught my attention. It was when he said that 70% of the erosion is impacting an area near Montreal and Lake Saint-Pierre. My colleague referenced a 1,600-kilometre study between Cornwall and Quebec City.

In his opinion, if 70% of the erosion had happened closer to Cornwall, or even a little further, near Toronto, would the federal government have paid?

Based on almost every other measure that the government is investing in, the answer is yes. I am curious to hear what my colleague thinks.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked a very good question. I think that I can answer it by giving another example.

When we said that Quebec's resources were at capacity and that the federal government needed to find solutions for asylum seekers and temporary residents, such as fair distribution among the provinces, we were called every name in the book. However, when the other provinces started saying that there was a problem, then all of a sudden, Ottawa started listening. Unfortunately, that is often the case. When Quebec has a problem, Ottawa does not seem to think it is serious or important. The government seems unable to listen to Quebec. Unfortunately, that is one of the reasons Quebecers think that they would be better off in their own country. This government does not work for them.

*[English]*

**Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the committee on transport for bringing this forward and being a champion on this issue. As my colleague noted, Conservatives on the committee supported the recommendations and supported the general thrust of the report. As a Great Lakes MP, I share his concerns, but we also added a supplementary report with a lens from fiscal responsibility because there are existing budgets, existing resources and existing expertise that could be brought to bear for this problem.

From my colleague's time on the committee, he will know that we have had many discussions, just to give two examples, regarding wasted funds on the Canada Infrastructure Bank and wasted funds on McKinsey consultants. Maybe what is lacking, because I will agree with my colleague, is that the current Liberal government is all talk and no action. Maybe what is lacking is political will, because obviously the resources exist.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his work at committee. I read the Conservatives' supplementary opinion. Obviously, I understand their point of view. They want to limit spending. They simply say that they have no problem with investing in this, but that the money needs to come from somewhere else, so spending in other areas will have to be reduced. I agree with the member that there is a lot of waste on the part of the federal government.

However, where our points of view differ is in where the money should come from. I think that there is a lot of waste, particularly when it comes to the money going to the oil industry. It is unnecessary, especially since we are investing in an obsolete industry that should not get any more of our money. Instead, we should turn toward the economy of the future. Unfortunately, when we invest money in a sector with no future, it only delays the work that needs to be done. We need to focus on a zero-emission economy for the future. It would be far more productive and profitable. This is an example of where we could get the money. Our shorelines will still be there in 50 years, so it is important that we take care of them. It would be nice if we could save people's properties before their houses end up in the water.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Louis-Philippe Sauvé (LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague what he thinks is behind the federal government's inaction in this matter. More broadly, there is something that struck me in his presentation, and that was the federal government's insistence on meddling in the provinces' jurisdictions while neglecting its own responsibilities.

Generally speaking, what does he think is behind the federal government's attitude in this regard?

• (1035)

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Speaker, I am obviously prejudiced against the federal government, but I wanted to give it a fair chance.

I initially blamed the lack of a response, and especially the lack of proactive measures, on the minister in place at the time, Marc Garneau. It was almost impossible to schedule a meeting or have a discussion with him. We felt like he was asleep at the switch. We could not believe how uninterested he was in solving problems that were presented to him.

Since then, there have been three other transport ministers. There was the member for Mississauga Centre, the member for Honoré-Mercier, and now the member for Oakville. There seems to be constant turnover, and apparently, this is not the top file for incoming ministers. Every time, we have to contact the new minister to fill them in on the issue. Often, they are not from Quebec. To them, it is not an important issue, because it only affects Quebec. They think we should deal with it ourselves, even though it is the result of the federal government's inaction.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak on the St. Lawrence River and just how important that river has been, not only for us today, as a nation, but also for tomorrow and the days before. I think of the history of Canada and the important role the St. Lawrence River played to our overall development as a nation. My ancestors came from that whole area of the St. Lawrence River, and many of them would have been on the St. Lawrence and witnessed, even back then, issues related to the shoreline.

The point is that, whether it is my ancestors who lived close to the St. Lawrence River and used the St. Lawrence river or today, there have always been concerns in regard to the shoreline. However, I think that the overall support in the general direction of how the St. Lawrence has contributed to Canada being the nation it is today is overwhelmingly positive. We have seen economic development and community development that has been to the great benefit of all.

It is interesting that the member opposite said that this is completely a federal responsibility, yet if we take a look at part of his argument, it was that commercial vessels are using the St. Lawrence. He referenced speed as one of those issues that causes a problem, and the wakes are a problem. I acknowledge that, but one of the actions that was taken by the government a while back was to recognize that the province and Ottawa needed to work together,

and that is why they put together a committee of both provincial and federal reps. I will go into a little more detail on that shortly.

I wanted to pick up a bit in terms of why this is, and that is why I posed the question I did to the member. This has been an issue for a long time, as I have talked about. I do not question that at all, but the report itself was tabled almost a year and a half ago. If we take a look at the Order Paper, what we will see is pages and pages of reports that have been brought to the standing committees. If one wanted to, they could stand up every day for the rest of the session until the next election and bring forward concurrence requests.

I question whether that is the most valuable use of the time here on the floor of the House of Commons. It takes nothing away from how important this issue is for all of Canada, because it is a trading corridor. Products that come in through the St. Lawrence are distributed throughout the country. All of Canada benefits if we have a healthy St. Lawrence River, so I do not question the importance of the subject matter.

I am surprised, as the member made reference, that he has raised it in question period. I do not know how I would have missed that, because there are not very many question periods I have missed over the years. I will have to wait and see, but I am glad he raised the issue during question period, and hopefully he will continue to do so, because it is an important issue. That is one of the reasons there is such a detailed response to the report from the department, and I am going to talk about that response, but before I do that, the question I had posed to the member was this: "Why today?"

• (1040)

Since we have been back in session, I think it is fair to say that there has been marginal time on government legislation. Initially, the Conservative Party would go into the Order Paper, look through the pages and pages of reports, and start taking out concurrence reports in order for the government not to be able to talk about legislation. Now, if we were not talking about the report today, we would be talking about the privilege issue that was raised by the Conservative Party.

Yesterday, I posed a question, and I think it is a legitimate question, in terms of the St. Lawrence and the many issues in the reports that are on the Order Paper. Yes, they are important issues, and there are many ways they can be dealt with, but is there a concentrated effort to prevent legislation from being debated? Whether it is the Citizenship Act that the Bloc, NDP and Liberal members support and the Conservatives oppose, or the military court that every member inside this House supports, the legislative agenda is being held up.

I am debating whether or not it is actually a privilege issue, which is supposed to be supreme in terms of the order of debates. However, it is being utilized as a tool of obstruction and not the privilege itself. If I had a choice of talking about what the member is raising with the St. Lawrence River—

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I actually think that maybe the member is solving it now, but I was just wondering if he could let us know exactly how Liberal corruption fits into the St. Lawrence. We know it fits somehow, but if he could connect the two, that would be great.



*Routine Proceedings*

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order, but maybe a point of debate.

We will return to the hon. parliamentary secretary, and I am sorry for the interruption.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member's point of order has made the case for me that, if I had a choice to talk about the games the Conservatives are playing, day in and day out, or the St. Lawrence River, I would rather talk about the St. Lawrence River. However, I will expand upon the topic.

Just like the St. Lawrence River is important to all of Canada, especially the province of Quebec, the issue of water erosion goes far beyond the St. Lawrence River. I would argue that talking about the shores of our oceans, rivers and lakes, as well as the impact of our commercial, residential or recreational activities along them, would be a wonderful debate to have. I would also argue that the St. Lawrence River is a very important part of our lives. If I were in opposition, I would encourage a debate of that nature.

I will give an example. The Red River and the Assiniboine River are two rivers that connect in the city of Winnipeg. To our communities and our cities, our rivers are so very important. Our Red River, our Assiniboine River and our Seine River are some of Winnipeg's greatest assets, but we are, unfortunately, seeing riverbank erosion taking place. There has been a big push, in which I have ultimately argued the opposite of what the member opposite was saying about who has responsibility.

I will give a tangible example. In Winnipeg, my suggestion was to have a water authority deal with all aspects of our waterways, including the Red River, the Assiniboine River and the Seine River, because the city of Winnipeg needs those rivers. In many ways, that would help the development of our city. The same principle could apply to the St. Lawrence River, along with the many other rivers that flow through our communities.

In Winnipeg, to a certain degree, we have a good starting point, which was put in place a number of years ago, with The Forks and its development. Prior to The Forks development, there was virtually no traffic going down to The Forks, where the Red and the Assiniboine rivers meet. As a direct result of the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government, today, The Forks is Manitoba's number one tourist attraction. I suspect that, if members have been to Winnipeg, chances are they have been to The Forks. That development, including the protection of the shorelines, were investments made by not one level of government, but by all levels of government, as they recognized just how important our rivers are to our communities.

We do not have big ships bringing in all sorts of transport and products or exporting products. It is not the economic hub of the St. Lawrence River, but I can tell the member opposite that our waterways are of great importance to the city of Winnipeg. I suspect that, whether we are talking about cities such as Winnipeg or Edmonton, it is an importance issue, just as it is for the St. Lawrence River, in British Columbia, around Vancouver Island in the ocean, and around Halifax.

• (1045)

These are all important waterways, not only to the immediate communities, but also to all Canadians. Another example is the port of Churchill in Manitoba. It might not be unanimous among all politicians, but I would definitely like to see more activity taking place in the Port of Churchill.

**An hon. member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I see some of my Conservative friends agree with that point, which is a good thing. I hope to see more development, because I understand and I appreciate the value of economics and the benefits to the communities.

Let there be no doubt, the St. Lawrence River was the lifeline for generations. As I have pointed out, my ancestors lived close to the St. Lawrence River. If it was not for the St. Lawrence River, who knows if I would even be here because of the role that it played in the development of the province of Quebec, not to mention all of Canada.

As members of government, we have recognized the harm that is caused, and that is one of the reasons why we have invested financial resources and have taken some budget and legislative actions, as we have in the past, to recognize and take actions where we can. That means also working with other levels of government. One can get a real understanding and appreciation in the change in attitudes from this government compared to Stephen Harper's government.

I suggest to the person who moved the motion to take a look at infrastructure dollars. Contrast the infrastructure dollars spent by this government to previous governments, in particular the Stephen Harper Conservative government. As a government, Liberals have spent more to support Quebec on infrastructure, in all likelihood, than any other government in generations. I would like to think that a good amount of those infrastructure dollars was to support the St. Lawrence River, either directly or indirectly. We are talking a great deal of money. That is why I say there have been budgetary measures, some more direct than others.

That is why I would suggest to my colleagues that this is an interesting report to read through. I was provided with some thoughts to share, and I will try to get into that right away. Before doing so, I would suggest to the members opposite that, in debating the issue, there is no reason why we could not have expanded that discussion in the form of an opposition day motion. With an opposition day motion, we would be able to get members to broaden the debate, to ensure that we are not only talking about the St. Lawrence. Members could represent, either directly or indirectly, aspects that need to be discussed. In my case, it would be a long family history that takes me back to the St. Lawrence that piques my interest in this particular river.

*Routine Proceedings*

This is not something that is just in the province of Quebec. As I pointed out, it could be in British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick. One can ultimately go to the territories, to Churchill and so forth. All of these have an interest in not only what Ottawa is doing, but also how Ottawa can work with other jurisdictions to be able to make a difference. I would think that would be a more productive debate because, as the member himself has made clear, this is a debate that took place well over a year and a half ago.

• (1050)

There is the report, and there is a lot of material that I was provided with that I have not been able to get to. One of the things I should comment on is the voluntary speed reductions, just to show that I actually did get some information, because I do appreciate what it is that the member is trying to get across. That is why I made reference to the sense of co-operation.

In 1988, there was a joint initiative between the governments of Canada and Quebec, so the two governments, to create the St. Lawrence action plan, which “aims to conserve, restore, protect, and enhance the St. Lawrence ecosystem.” It has all sorts of initiatives. The government's response to the committee report also reads:

However, should the effectiveness of the voluntary measures diminish, there exist legislative powers under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 - namely the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations and Navigation Safety Regulations, 2020 - which could provide a means of imposing regulatory requirements in areas of the St. Lawrence to address outstanding issues or concerns.

In that joint committee, they took a look at speed reductions. When we take a look at it from a volunteer perspective, it was 90%-plus higher with the people or the commercial vessels that were actually obeying or following that. However, we still have other regulations and laws that are now in place, as recent as 2020, to ensure that, if there are additional things we could do, at least we would be open to it, and we have laws in place and regulations that can be supported.

I think there is all sorts of reasons to be optimistic. The issue is whether we can get the different levels of government to work together so we can ensure the recreational, commercial and residential activities are all being given fair treatment, debate and discussion in the House.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to my colleague's remarks.

The first thing that bears mentioning is that he said this might not be the most pressing issue of the day and that we could discuss something else. I hope that is not the government's actual response or position, because there are hundreds of people in my riding who have been fighting for this for years. They find the government's inaction discouraging. Now that we are talking about it, we are being told that the government does not want to talk about it today. I do not think that is the kind of response my constituents want to hear from their government.

The second thing is that the Liberal member said he did not remember hearing me speak of this during question period. I am going to list three dates and I would like to know where he was on each of them. Where was he on May 30, 2019? I think he was a member of the House then. On November 24, 2022, I am pretty sure he was a member of the House then too. The same goes for March 20, 2023, because he is very often in the House, as he has stated. This all means that he has the opportunity to be here. We know he is here. I would like him to take a look at those three dates, because I was in question period on those days and I spoke to the shoreline erosion problem.

The member complained that I never talk about other places, apart from the St. Lawrence, affected by the same phenomenon. The fact is that there are various causes. Tides are the main cause of erosion in the Magdalen Islands and British Columbia. In the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, navigation is the culprit. Even the experts from the Great Lakes and Ontario area who appeared before the committee said that the most pronounced effects occur on the St. Lawrence, in the vicinity of Montreal.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member opposite asked three questions. I know the dates: May 2019, November 2022 and March 2023. It would be interesting to find out when the actual report was tabled. It might have been after March 2023; we will have to get confirmation.

I am glad the member realizes it is an issue. I am going to go to the first part of the question. The member talked about hundreds of individuals in his riding who are interested. I can assure him that thousands of his constituents would have been interested in Bill C-63, the online harms act. I understand that the Bloc supports it, as do the NDP and Green members.

The government has been trying to get the bill passed, but those darn Conservatives will not let it pass. They can be a mean group of people. They bring up concurrence reports all the time. Now they are using questions of privilege. They are going out of their way to prevent the legislation from passing.

What would the member's constituents want? Would they want the legislation passed today, or would they rather have another day of debate on this specific issue? That is why I would encourage the members of the Bloc to look at an opposition day. Let us talk about shorelines but also allow for some of the important legislation, some of which even the Bloc party supports. However, it is participating in supporting the Conservatives by allowing concurrence reports.

• (1100)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before our colleague from Winnipeg North's speech, there was a more informative speech from our colleague from the province of Quebec, whose riding is actually on the St. Lawrence. We are talking about the erosion of the St. Lawrence River due to shipping. I am reading from the recommendations from the committee report, which call on the Government of Canada to do this, that and the other thing.

*Routine Proceedings*

My question for the member for Winnipeg North is this: What role does the International Joint Commission have with respect to maintenance of the St. Lawrence River? It is not just a Canadian issue; it is also an American issue.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I think we always have to be cognizant of the environment around us, which goes beyond our own shorelines, and the agencies that do the monitoring. I do not know all of them, nor would I pretend to know.

What I do know is that one of the greatest threats, as highlighted already this morning, is the issue of commercial use of the St. Lawrence River. Speed causes the wakes that are of great concern. That is why the federal government and the Province of Quebec put together a committee. It ultimately led to a reduction in speed, which is administered in a volunteer fashion. I believe that 98% of people are actually following it. That is pretty good, I would suggest. There is still room for improvement, but we will do what we can.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech, but I did not hear a reference to the shoreline protection program. The report outlines a clear recommendation to re-establish the program. It was cut in the 1990s. It has not been implemented by Conservative or Liberal governments. Why has the Liberal government failed to re-establish this important program?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily know the details. What I can say is that I made reference to the amount of money the Government of Canada is investing in infrastructure, which is second to virtually no other government in the last 40, 50 or 60 years.

Part of that infrastructure investment looks to the provinces to identify priority areas. I would be very surprised if we did not see some of the money flowing through provinces or municipalities that ultimately are there to, either directly or indirectly, support the issue that the member raised. Even the investments in bridges can be an indirect benefit for the St. Lawrence River, as an example.

**Hon. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Winnipeg North for his commitment to the riverways, not just the St. Lawrence but also the Red River, the Fraser River and rivers across the country. An additional issue of concern, from my perspective, regarding commercial and recreational vehicle traffic is the issue of noise and its impact on the marine ecosystem. Our government has taken a lot of measures and made a lot of investment through the ocean protection plans, but I believe more needs to be done to study the impact of noise on the marine environment.

Not just whales are at risk, like southern resident killer whales on the west coast in the Salish Sea and whales elsewhere; fish and plant life that those fish depend on are also impacted by noise. Therefore, what are the member's thoughts about the commercial benefit of Canada being a leader in changing the vessel engine and propeller design to reduce noise to help our ecosystems right across the country?

• (1105)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I wish I had made reference in my main comments to the Fraser River and, whether it is the Fraser River or the St. Lawrence River, how important the

river is. I truly believe that Canadians as a whole understand the importance of our riverways. When we look at what the public's expectations are, and that bar continues to rise, I think that technology is going to play a very important role.

The member is accurate in her assessment in terms of the degree to which a propeller and its construction can make a difference, let alone the engines and propulsion systems that are put into place, all of which can make a significant positive impact. That is why I would suggest that we do need to have a broader discussion on the issue. Quite frankly, the best place to have that discussion, at least in great detail, is likely in a standing committee. I would encourage members who are truly interested in the commercial, residential and recreational use of our riverways to see that it would be a wonderful study for a standing committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have a little reminder to just try to keep our questions and our answers as short as possible so everyone can participate. There were a few interactions that were four minutes or longer. I do not really want to interrupt while people are speaking, but if that continues I will start cutting people off to make sure we can all participate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a great pleasure to rise in the House, but it is an even greater pleasure today because I am sharing my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, no doubt an excellent member and a great colleague as well.

I want to clarify something. The concurrence debate was brought by one of my fellow members. We hear the member for Winnipeg North consistently say that this is somehow inappropriate. He says that it should have been brought up in question period, which evidently it was three times; that it should have been an opposition day motion; or that it should have been brought up in committee.

It was studied in committee. It is completely legitimate within the process, and it is a debate that needs to happen. While I may not agree with my colleague 100%, it is a completely legitimate debate that is important not only to folks in his riding but also to people up and down the St. Lawrence Seaway. Shoreline erosion, ironically, as the member for Winnipeg North raised, is an issue that is from coast to coast, with various rivers, lakes and otherwise.

In 2019, which happens to be the year I was elected, I spent a particularly large amount of time talking to residents in my surrounding neighbourhoods. There was flooding taking place. The highest recorded level that Lake Ontario had ever been at was in 2019. This was right on the heels of the record-setting flooding in 2017.

*Routine Proceedings*

I was with a resident who was literally in ankle-deep water, who told me that their yard, where they played with their grandchildren, extended 50 yards farther out, so they lost 50 yards of their property. I spoke to another lady who was well into her 80s, who told me that she had not had a good night's sleep in weeks because she did not know whether this would be the night that her basement or her house flooded, as she could hear the lapping of Lake Ontario drawing closer and closer. She lived in terror, thinking that her house would soon be flooded.

Therefore, shoreline erosion is a real and significant issue that merits debate, and I thank my colleague for bringing forward the concurrence debate.

I will talk a bit about the importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Of my wife's two grandfathers, one started on the lakers in Thunder Bay, and the other one started in Gaspé. They travelled up and down the waters, eventually settling down in Niagara. That gave them the opportunity to work at a job, see the world and eventually start a family. I am, like the member for Winnipeg North, or my children are at least, here because of the St. Lawrence Seaway and the tremendous importance it has in our economy.

Let us look at what the study says. It confirmed what we knew already: Shoreline erosion in Lake Ontario, the Great Lakes and many places elsewhere in the country is a significant issue. Let us look at the facts. It was a Liberal government in 1998 that cut the shoreline protection program, so it is a consistent theme that Liberal failures have created problems. It was just like when the Liberals cut health care in the 1990s under Jean Chrétien and then Paul Martin, yet somehow they provide the misinformation, and I would rather use the other word, to be candid, that they are not making cuts.

However, it is the reality that Stephen Harper dramatically increased funding for infrastructure following the 2008 economic crisis. It is also a reality, a fact, that Stephen Harper increased health care funding. According to all of the misinformation we hear repeatedly from the other side, we would think the opposite were true.

• (1110)

When we look at the problem of shoreline erosion, I think there is agreement on all sides that we need a multilateral partnership. It is particularly complicated because, as one of the other members said today, it also involves the United States of America. We need to have our American partners, the federal government, the provinces and municipalities on board. We also need private stakeholders, such as residents, communicating what they want to get done, as well shipping.

I would agree with my colleague. It is undeniable that shipping causes shoreline erosion, or a part of it. Shipping, and let us call a spade a spade, is important to our economy as well. We all need to look at everything and come up with an approach to move forward to protect the residents, protect our economy and to grow a better and bigger Canada as we go forward.

The shoreline erosion problem has been discussed for years and years, yet there has been no action by the Liberal government. One of the things I disagree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois

on is that he seems to believe the Liberal federal government can solve this problem. I would like to take the member down memory lane and look at some of the problems it tried to fix over the the last nine years.

The government told us that housing was too expensive and that we needed more affordable housing. What has happened? The price of housing has doubled and even tripled in some parts of the country. It told us that there was too much addiction and drug use and that it would tackle that. What do we see in our streets today? Crime and chaos. It told us it would balance the budget, that it would be “a teeny-tiny little deficit”, as former prime minister Stephen Harper said, and now we have a massive deficit and debt.

Do members, and not just my friend and colleague from the transport committee, really believe that after nine years the government can fix anything? Former U.S president Ronald Reagan said, “The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help.” Far be it for me to change a quote of the great Ronald Reagan, but we do need to Canadianize it to “The 10 scariest words in the English language are: I'm from the Liberal government, and I'm here to help.”

I can imagine a world where the government were to authorize itself billions of dollars to fix the shoreline erosion problem. What would happen? Just like every other problem it tried to fix it would get worse. There would also be Liberal insiders, consultants and a lot of paperwork. A lot of Liberal insiders would get very wealthy, just like with SDTC and a myriad of other programs, the consulting scandals, all of these scandals. However, nothing would actually get done, because this is a government of mismanagement, overspending and a complete and utter lack of results.

I have a little secret. The difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives is that Liberals judge the success of a program by how many billions of dollars they can spend and how long it can last, whereas Conservatives judge the success of a project or a program by whether there is success. When Conservatives cut the carbon tax, we will also fix many different problems. We will have a carbon tax election and elect a common-sense Conservative government that will restore powerful paycheques, make Canada the freest country on earth and ensure that the promise of Canada is restored.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to give my colleague, who now sits on the committee with me, the opportunity to comment on certain remarks, particularly those made by the parliamentary secretary. Like my colleague, he also mentioned in his intervention that the seaway and shipping are part of Canada's way of life. The economic benefits are incredible. Yes, shipping supplies Quebec, Ontario, even part of the United States in the Great Lakes region, and other regions. It is like a gold mine. We cannot shut it down. We need it.

However, it is causing collateral damage. Unfortunately, unlike the benefits, which extend everywhere—in Ontario, Saskatchewan, probably all over Canada and the United States—the problems are mostly in Quebec. Why is it that the people benefiting from it, even elsewhere, are not fixing the problems? The problems are affecting people's lives. Given the scope of the benefits, should those people not be compensated?

[English]

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree that shoreline erosion in the St. Lawrence Seaway is a real and significant problem. I would caution my friend that emboldening this or giving billions of dollars in additional funds to the Liberal government would not solve the problem. It would grow bureaucracy and help Liberal insiders. At the end of the day, it would make Quebecers worse off. We need solutions that help Quebec and grow its economy.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this may be a bit off topic, but definitely relevant to the speech the member just gave. He indicated that Stephen Harper increased health care costs. I have heard a number of Conservatives say that. That is somewhat misleading, because it was Paul Martin's government that got the health care accord, which secured 6% increases for a 10-year period of time. The Harper government just happened to take the reins of power after the health care accord was signed, which is why we have record-high health care payments today. It was not because of Harper. In fact, when the health care accord expired, the first thing he did was to reduce the percentage increase, I think from 6% to 3%. The member can confirm that, but I am sure that is fairly accurate.

Would the member not agree that there is a great deal of benefit with these significant-sized ports, such as employment opportunities and so forth?

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that after the dramatic draconian cuts to health care by Jean Chrétien, Stephen Harper increased health care. In fairness to Chrétien, the reason he had to cut that was because of the massive debts and deficits, driven up by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. We have these repeated patterns of Liberal spending over and again.

However, I would agree, and I will leave this on a positive note, that there is tremendous opportunity, particularly with transporting Canadian energy outside our ports and railways, to expand our trade throughout the world.

• (1120)

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the shoreline protection program and criticized the Liberal government for cutting it, but Stephen Harper was in power for 10 years and did not re-establish it.

The member claims that the idea that the Conservatives made cuts is somehow untrue. I was working in organizations supporting women who experience intimate partner violence. I know the Harper government made cuts. Canadians know that the Conservatives make cuts.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, I know that is a sincere and authentic question and I appreciate it.

### *Routine Proceedings*

After the last nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, we have seen record levels of gender-based violence, criminality and domestic violence. We need to get back on track. We need to get our country fixed. We need to get our loved ones home. We need to ensure that women are protected.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to talk about this important study by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that addresses the St. Lawrence River, where I have lived since I made my home in Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies. I was raised in La Pocatière, along the St. Lawrence River. I have spent my entire life along the St. Lawrence River. I have watched the St. Lawrence River's shoreline, especially the south shore, change over time.

For years and even centuries, the shoreline has been transformed by nature, by the tides—because we have very high tides back home—and by ships. Obviously, whales and the entire coastal environment are also impacted by maritime operations. Maritime operations were very extensive during certain years a long time ago.

The shoreline has long been eroding. Let us be clear. I understand that mayors were consulted for the study that was carried out. I was mayor of La Pocatière. One way or the other, municipal officials of the past and present can attest to the problem.

I will give a few very clear examples. In my riding of Montmagny, shoreline erosion is a serious problem in Cap-aux-Oies, home to the Pointe-aux-Oies campground. In fact, the city of Montmagny worked with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to begin stabilizing the shoreline. If no action is taken, the campground may not disappear, but it will inevitably lose some of its sites in the long run because of the serious shoreline erosion.

Despite Montmagny's ongoing relationship with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Quebec government, the matter has still not been settled. In fact, our situation in Quebec is unique. We have always wanted more autonomy, and we have it when it comes to the environment, so, inevitably, the environmental specialists in Quebec and the environmental specialists in Ottawa do not always agree on the situation or the potential results of certain efforts. For that reason, we often find ourselves in situations like the one in Montmagny, where we cannot find a solution. We are trying—I got involved to some extent—to put the pressure on to find a solution, since there is already money available in the grant programs for Montmagny to do the work. Money for the work, therefore, is not an issue here, and neither is it an issue in many other cases because the money is there. Consider the federal government's climate change adaptation program or the green municipal fund. A lot of work is already paid for.

*Routine Proceedings*

I would like to note that a few years back, not that long ago, there was the *Projet Résilience côtière*, led by Université du Québec à Rimouski. The laboratory involved focused on the dynamic behaviour and integrated management of the coastal zone. Obviously, the coastal zone includes the part of the St. Lawrence that runs in front of my colleagues' ridings, in the Sorel region, among others. I will take the time to read the description of the laboratory to give members an idea of what was done in the past.

The Laboratoire de dynamique et de gestion intégrée des zones côtières (LDG-IZC) at Université du Québec à Rimouski led a research-action project entitled "Coastal resilience project: developing tools for adaptation to coastal erosion for the municipalities in Quebec's maritime regions".

As far as I know, Quebec's maritime regions are also part of the Great Lakes and the entire corridor that runs through the narrower regions where boats create wake that causes shoreline erosion.

The project ran from January 2017 to December 2021. It ended nearly three years ago. It helped develop a tool enabling the coastal municipalities to collect information to eventually carry out the work.

• (1125)

I am raising this point because work to build coastal resilience and counter the effects of shoreline erosion has been ongoing for several years. I served as the mayor of La Pocatière from 2005 to 2009, and even back when I was the vice-warden of the Kamouraska regional county municipality, I can guarantee that we were already having problems with shoreline erosion. We still do, and always will. However, work and research were already under way at the time. A lot of money has already been invested in research.

The problem here is not a lack of funding for research. The problem is that the Liberal government, which has been in power since 2015, never takes action. It does research and it funds research. That is not a problem. However, when it comes time to implement the solutions proposed based on the research findings, the government cannot seem to get anything done.

The problem is not a lack of funding. The federal budget has increased by \$151 billion, with 100,000 new public servants being hired. That is not the issue. There are people who can do that. It is not really a problem. I think that the problem we are having right now is that the public service has grown so large that the relationship between Ottawa and Quebec, in particular, has become a lot more complicated when it comes to environmental issues, and Quebec and Ottawa do not always have the same solutions.

Let me give another very clear and important example. There are about five marinas on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, from Berthier-sur-Mer in my riding to Île Verte. The north side of the St. Lawrence does not necessarily have erosion problems, because it is much deeper. The rocks are right there.

On the south shore, however, there are large, very flat, muddy stretches. Marinas get mud coming into the area. As members likely know, these areas are often surrounded by rocks to protect the boats from the waves and turbulence of the river. As a result, a lot of silt accumulates inside these marinas. In Rivière-du-Loup, in particular, there is an extremely short period in which to dredge the silt, which is a problem. It is a very significant problem because it is a question of protecting beluga whales and other marine species.

The silt does not come from the sky, it comes from the St. Lawrence River. It is in the river. It just collects in certain places. What is more, most of the boats in marinas are sailboats. They cause little or no pollution, so the silt is not contaminated. It can be put back in the river.

All the issues are like that. The war between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada, with Fisheries and Oceans imposing such major restrictions, is costing boat owners a fortune. They want to be able to take out all that silt and put it back in the river. Dredging, that is what I am talking about.

Anyway, about the St. Lawrence River shoreline, it is not nearly as wide there as it is where I come from. In our region, the river is 12 to 15 kilometres wide. The closer it gets to the ocean, the wider it is. It is even wider in the gulf, so there is a little less impact, and those impacts are naturally occurring, not caused by ships. I understand that, in my colleague's riding, in his region, erosion is caused mainly by passing ships and their wake. I understand that my colleague wants to improve the situation and protect the shorelines in his region. Of course he does. It is also part of his job to listen to the people in his riding.

I believe that, as we speak, money is available and proposals are out there. If we want to do research in this area, universities are willing to do it. Funding is available. All these things are already available. I do not think we should be adding new committees and new business. I also think we need to work with Quebec to get projects going as soon as possible, but those projects have to be easy, quick and efficient.

• (1130)

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised by the way my colleague's speech ended. I think that his riding would also benefit from general collaboration. The thing we need to realize about shoreline erosion is that action taken in one place can be detrimental to three neighbours upstream and three neighbours downstream if it is not done properly.

What we need is a concerted effort that includes comprehensive planning covering the St. Lawrence Seaway, each structure and each side effect. I think we need this, and I think that the federal government has to take responsibility. The St. Lawrence Seaway generates several billion dollars of revenue each year. Over 150,000 tonnes of goods move through it annually. I think the seaway brings in enough revenue that we can afford to help and take care of the people who live along its banks.

I would like the member's response to that.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague's statement. A study entitled "Coastal Resilience Project: developing tools for adaptation to coastal erosion for municipalities in Quebec's maritime regions" looked at 24 regional county municipalities, or RCMs. We would have to confirm which RCMs were involved, but it covered 123 municipalities and 10 indigenous communities. The only indigenous community in my riding is the Maliseet nation in Cacouna. This inevitably goes beyond the territory of my riding. The member is absolutely right to say that if you intervene in one place, it can cause collateral damage somewhere else.

What I am saying is that this challenge already exists. Maritime Quebec already exists. No one is reinventing this. It already exists in Quebec City, where there used to be a ministry responsible for it. I think it is still there. There are ways of working collaboratively with Quebec, with Fisheries and Oceans, and with local stakeholders, such as municipalities. The solutions are there, but the government has never wanted to implement them.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to pick up on what the member just indicated, whether it is the Fraser River on the west coast, the Saskatchewan River on the Prairies, the Red River, the Assiniboine River or the St. Lawrence River, with regard to the shorelines, where the federal government can step up to the plate, it should and it has. It is important for other jurisdictions to also step up to the plate because of the economic benefits, recreational benefits and residential benefits. We would have a healthier river system if, in fact, we had co-operation. I would not want to advocate that the provinces play no role. That seems to be what the Bloc is doing today

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, my colleague is from Winnipeg North. I do not understand why the Liberals cannot find someone else to answer our questions, considering the number of members they have in Quebec and who represent regions along the St. Lawrence. I am thinking about the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, who is also the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. Why is a member from Winnipeg, in the middle of the country, responding to us about the St. Lawrence? I honestly do not get it. There are certainly a number of Liberal members, not just one, from near the St. Lawrence.

To answer the question directly, we have no problem with the Province of Quebec. Quebec is also working on this. I think that the member said it earlier: consultation is important. There is no sense in robbing Peter to pay Paul. Everyone needs to work together.

• (1135)

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has fought to have invasive carp eliminated before getting into Canada's tributaries and lakes. New Democrats fought to get the first microplastics ban passed in the House of Commons, which was then made into regulation. As well, we have fought to get some of the programs to deal with phosphorus.

One of the ones I have yet to get finished and still want to work on, and on which I want the members' opinions, is an action plan for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, for the rise and also the falling of the water levels that take place, so we would know where to dredge, where we would do remedial action and so forth. That would take collaboration between the cities, the provinces and the federal government in the United States. It would also provide a list of business items to make sure our waterways are protected not only for the environment but also for the economy to remain strong.

I wonder what the Conservatives' position is on that suggestion, in terms of creating a business plan to deal with the rise and the fall of water levels in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question. In fact, this has come up in various speeches. When it comes to Canada's economy, 80% of materials are transported by ship. There is already an economic plan for all of this. It already exists. I have been hearing about the importance of marine transportation across Quebec and Canada for 30 years. Experts are already working on it. We must continue to work together to ensure that we never have to face a cut in these services one day.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being able to speak today about reducing the impact of commercial shipping on shoreline erosion. I will be splitting my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The report sheds light on an important issue, an issue that impacts not only the environment but also the livelihoods and safety of thousands of Canadians living along the shores of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The erosion of our shorelines due to commercial shipping is a serious concern in communities, and witnesses who appeared at committee made it clear that action is required to protect our natural ecosystems and that the people who live and work on these waterways deserve protection.

[*Translation*]

For decades, the waters of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River have played a central role in our economy, supporting commerce, transportation and industry. However, this same activity, particularly commercial shipping, is now one of the main factors driving shoreline erosion. The narrow passages of the St. Lawrence River and other parts of this corridor are particularly vulnerable to erosion caused by wakes from ships and other human activities.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

I think it is important to remember that erosion is not just about losing land; it is about the loss of infrastructure, homes and livelihoods. It is about communities like Saint-Ignace-De-Loyola, where residents are witnessing their properties crumble away year by year, due to waves created by commercial vessels. The impact of the commercial shipping industry is not just an environmental issue; it is a public safety issue and it is a threat to their way of life.

The report makes one thing abundantly clear: The federal government has failed to take a leading role in addressing shoreline erosion. Many witnesses from various communities, municipalities, indigenous communities and environmental organizations pointed out that we need a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach that involves all levels of government, but the leadership must come from Ottawa.

New Democrats echo the calls in this report for a shoreline protection program. This program was cancelled in the 1990s. Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to re-establish the program, which provided critical support to shorelines along the St. Lawrence. By reintroducing this program, we can bring together provincial and municipal governments, indigenous groups, industry leaders and scientific experts to develop real, sustainable solutions to erosion.

I want to take a moment to recognize the important initiative introduced by my colleague the MP for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. His bill granting rights to the St. Lawrence River is an important and bold step when it comes to rethinking our relationship with nature. By granting legal personhood to the river, we would acknowledge the intrinsic value of our natural ecosystems and their right to thrive. This bill is not just symbolic; it represents a fundamental shift toward environmental justice. If passed, it would give the river a voice, empowering communities and environmental advocates to take legal action on its behalf when ecosystems are threatened. The St. Lawrence is the lifeblood of our environment, our history, our communities and our future. We must recognize its right to exist, flourish and regenerate. The bill is a critical piece of the broader movement to protect the river from the very threats outlined in this report.

Despite the urgency of these issues, however, the Liberal government has dragged its feet. Year after year, we hear promises of environmental action, but its cancellation in the 1990s of the shoreline protection program, which was not reinstated under the current government or under the Harper government before it, is just one example of its failure to protect our vital ecosystems.

The Liberals have failed to act on erosion, failed to regulate commercial shipping and failed to listen to the communities that are most affected. On the west coast, I have been calling on the government to enact a mandatory 1,000-metre vessel buffer for endangered southern resident killer whales and to address the dumping of waste and effluent by commercial ships. The government continues to speak about environmental action and about climate action, while failing to implement critical protections for our waterways and shorelines.

● (1140)

We can no longer afford half measures, patchwork solutions or more studies with no follow-up. The time for action is now, and the federal government must be held accountable.

Many of the solutions to protect our natural environment and protect our communities are outlined in this report, and they are not in opposition to economic growth or to industry. It is about striking a balance between development and environmental sustainability. That is why the NDP will always work to ensure that workers in industries like commercial shipping are part of the solution, and why we believe that the companies themselves, the industries that benefit from the river, must contribute to preserving it through programs like the recommended fund for riparian restoration, which would be financed by commercial users of the corridor.

We know that the Conservatives are always pushing for deregulation and cuts, and they show a disregard for long-term environmental impacts and the failure to invest in future sustainability. The Conservatives claim to be in support of fiscal responsibility, but how can we be fiscally responsible if we ignore the environmental costs and the costs to communities that will continue to grow, putting communities and ecosystems at even greater risk?

To wrap up, I want to re-emphasize that we need action, not just more studies. I want to re-emphasize that this report is not just about studying the problem; it is about the action that is needed by the federal government. Now is the time to take that action. Re-establishing the shoreline protection program, passing the bill to grant rights to the St. Lawrence River, investing in research and sustainable solutions, regulating ship speeds and holding industries accountable are all necessary steps for protecting our shorelines and protecting the communities along them.

I urge the House, and in particular the government, which has the power to do this, to take the recommendations in this report seriously and act swiftly to protect our shorelines, our ecosystems and the Canadians who depend on them.

● (1145)

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her speech. We sit on the environment committee together.

One interesting issue with regard to shoreline erosion is the changing winds that have come with climate change. The member and I, sitting on the environment committee, have been looking at the Jasper wildfires, and one issue that has emerged is that we are experiencing unpredictable winds like never before because of climate change, which impacted the fire in Jasper.

I am wondering if the member would like to comment on the impact of climate change on shoreline erosion as an additional factor in shoreline erosion above and beyond vessels travelling through the St. Lawrence.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his work on the environment committee. It is a pleasure working with him.



*Routine Proceedings*

The impact of the climate crisis on our shorelines is immense. It is immense when it comes to the St. Lawrence River, but it is also immense when it comes to the shorelines on the coast of my home province of British Columbia. We know that rising sea levels and the increasing impacts of climate change are going to have a devastating impact on the infrastructure along the coast of Vancouver Island in my community of Victoria.

We need to take bold action to combat the climate crisis, and we also need to invest in communities to create climate-resilient spaces and communities that can thrive with the changing climate. However, I do not think acknowledging that is enough, and I hope the member heard in my speech a call to action. It is not enough to study these things; we need the government to act.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal members always want to throw everything at climate change, as in the forest fire example the Liberal member just brought up. The Liberals forget that they did not give \$500 million to add more firefighters and do more forest prevention exercises. In Jasper, the brush was not cleared the way it was supposed to.

It is the same situation when it comes to shoreline erosion. In my riding, we have been trying to get action since 2016 on very serious issues. We know the solutions that are needed, but the government just says it is seized with them. That is an engineering term we use. When a motor is seized, it means it is not moving. That is what we are seeing from the government.

I wonder if the member is seeing similar inaction in responding to the issues on her coast.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Speaker, I definitely see a lot of Liberal promises and Liberal inaction. We see broken promise after broken promise when it comes to the climate crisis and environmental protection. I would also say that the Conservatives seem to have thrown up their hands altogether, either denying that climate change is real or saying we somehow cannot do anything about it.

We need to take bold action that matches the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, but we also need to do everything we can to protect communities. Danielle Smith and her provincial Conservative government have had a detrimental impact on our ability to respond to wildfires. We heard from witnesses just yesterday about the recruitment and retention problems related to paying wildland firefighters \$22 an hour and not giving them health benefits or cancer coverage. It is no wonder we don't have the resources and people. We are not supporting the heroic efforts of our firefighters.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is very involved in the fight against climate change. We know that, in some areas of Quebec, climate change is responsible for significant shoreline erosion. As my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères explained, 70% of erosion between Montreal and Sorel, for example, is caused by commercial shipping. All of the experts agree that the government needs to take action and fulfill its responsibilities in its own areas of jurisdiction. However, the government has still not taken action.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Speaker, that is a really important question. It is why I focused my speech on the recommendations from this report.

We heard a very clear call to action, and the Liberal government has failed to take responsibility for erosion. I remind Canadians listening, and especially the government, that erosion is not just about the loss of land; it is about the loss to communities of their livelihoods and ecosystems. It is a loss to communities.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely glad to speak to this very important motion on shoreline erosion along the St. Lawrence River. Quebeckers and Montrealers have a very strong connection to the St. Lawrence River. It is a huge part of Quebec's identity, and we are attached to the river and all its tributaries, all the rivers that flow into this very large and beautiful river. I am from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, so the Richelieu River was obviously part of my childhood and my teen years. The Richelieu and other rivers feed into the St. Lawrence River.

My colleague from Victoria pointed out that I introduced a private member's bill to recognize the St. Lawrence River as a natural entity with legal status. The goal is to better protect it and enhance our ability to protect the environment, the ecosystems and the biodiversity connected to such a massive entity.

I just want to mention that I am a map aficionado. I love maps. I am a big fan of geography, and I recently noticed that, if we take the St. Lawrence River and superimpose it over Europe, placing the head of Lake Superior over the French city of Brest in Brittany, the beginning of the gulf would end up in Warsaw, Poland. That illustrates the considerable extent of what we are talking about today. Its length would cover almost all of western Europe, excluding Russia.

It is really important that we have this discussion to see how we can protect shorelines, banks, species, and ecosystems at risk. Multiple groups are concerned about the threats facing certain species, including the copper redhorse. Port expansion projects like the one in Contrecoeur could harm locations of strategic importance to the species' reproduction. This study is important not only for economic reasons, but also for biological reasons, including ecosystem protection. Personally, I am very pleased to participate in this debate.

*Routine Proceedings*

As I said, I introduced a private member's bill to give legal status to the St. Lawrence River. Given today's climate, I consider it all the more important precisely because of climate change. While preparing this bill, I had the opportunity to visit, travel around and meet with stakeholders in the northern and southern regions of the river. I clearly remember that people in the Lower St. Lawrence told me that Highway 132 was being threatened by shoreline erosion that is steadily eating away at the road year after year, and that Highway 132 might have to be moved at some point. If Highway 132 has to be moved because of the increasingly large waves hitting the banks of the St. Lawrence, or because of higher water levels or increased marine traffic, it just shows the impact that climate change can have on quality of life and regional development.

• (1155)

It is important to look at the situation from a broad, holistic point of view. People on the ground told me that this was very important to them, because it also means that some residents will have to move and leave their homes. It is a whole restructuring and redevelopment of the entire highway, along with certain towns and cities.

The bill I introduced is a novel idea. This is the first time in North America that a bill has been introduced to give legal status to a natural entity. This is a new idea in North America, but it has already happened other places in the world. In Central America, South America and Spain, for example, certain natural entities such as lakes and ponds have been given legal status.

The constitutions of some Central American states, as well as Ecuador, recognize that nature can have rights. I think we need to consider that here as well. The federal government needs to be able to work in a way that recognizes the value of the environment. It must also be able to work with Quebec and the municipalities, as well as first nations, to protect the banks of the St. Lawrence River, its ecosystems and the species that live there. That is extremely important.

The bill I introduced about the St. Lawrence also talks a lot about reconciliation and the need to think of the first nations and the indigenous peoples as guardians of our ecosystems, the environment and the St. Lawrence River and its tributaries. The bill also seeks to set up an oversight committee that would consist of 11 people appointed by the governments of Quebec and Ontario, and also by the Quebec's and Ontario's assemblies of first nations. The goal would be to monitor the St. Lawrence and have the capacity to act when necessary.

The bill would not only recognize the St. Lawrence as a legal entity and provide for an oversight committee, but it would also give us the ability to represent the river in court. This would allow for lawyers to be hired to argue on behalf of the river, just as people can argue on behalf of a company, a municipality, their family or themselves. It is a novel concept. Their case could truly be argued during a consultation or before a tribunal, by having someone say, I am representing the interests of the St. Lawrence River. The mandate would be conferred by the oversight committee that would be made up of five parts, because there would also be representatives from environmental groups who would defend the St. Lawrence River.

This is extremely important if we want to be able to guarantee future generations a healthy river that is full of life, where we have preserved the ecosystems, species and biodiversity for generations to come. It is also extremely important to look at this from an economic development perspective to ensure that any developments at the port of Quebec, the port of Montreal or the port of Montreal at Contrecoeur are done in a way that respects the river system as a whole.

• (1200)

The Montreal airport is not a very good example of harmonious land use. That area is home to an important endangered species, the monarch butterfly.

I think my time is up, so I will have to end there.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

Does he think it is an issue that Quebec and the other provinces have no authority over river, sea, air and rail routes that are not located entirely within their borders? For example, in 2014, riverside municipalities were distraught when the Harper government changed the allowable breadth for supertankers from 32 to 44 metres, if I am not mistaken. They were in a panic, but there was nothing they could do about it. Ottawa could do as it pleased.

In the end, all they could do was complain. There was not much else that could be done. In my colleague's opinion, is this a problem?

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

As far as river areas, rivers and the St. Lawrence are concerned, it is actually somewhat complicated. It is a bit complicated. For example, the surface of the water, what is under the water, the shoreline and the animal species that live there all fall under different jurisdictions. It is rather difficult to keep track. I quite agree with my colleague that we should simplify things. Right now, with the municipalities, the province, the Quebec government and the federal government sharing jurisdictions, it is really complicated and no one can really figure it out.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague reminded us of the proposal he made, as a member of Parliament, regarding the management of the St. Lawrence River. As we all know, this river is very important to our economy, but above all, it is important to our identity as Quebecers. The St. Lawrence River is not only our main transportation route, but it has also played an important role in our our history.

My question is this: This government has been in power for nine years. We know that the NDP has helped and supported this government over the past three years. Is the member disappointed to see that, rather than improving, the situation has actually deteriorated over the past nine years? I would invite him to answer that question. If he prefers, he can say what he wanted to say about the monarch butterfly and the Dorval airport.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Madam Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for asking such a good question.

The Liberals' inaction when it comes to defending the monarch butterfly at the Montreal airport is obvious. This Liberal government's track record on defending the environment over the past nine years is very disappointing overall.

We supported the government in exchange for progress in areas like dental care and pharmacare in the last two years. The Liberal government tends to talk a lot about defending the environment and defending biodiversity, but when it comes to making tough decisions that are really important and crucial for the environment, it just does not happen.

• (1205)

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I have learned through this report that there used to be a shoreline protection program, but the federal government stopped funding it. Reading the first recommendation, I see that it is recommended to re-establish that program. Can the member share with us the importance of implementing this recommendation?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Nunavut is asking a question that is extremely important, not only for the St. Lawrence River, but for all riverbanks throughout Quebec and Canada, and Nunavut as well. I think this recommendation is crucial.

The federal government must not shirk its responsibilities with regard to defending our environment, our ecosystems and the banks of all these rivers, the thousands of rivers that make up Quebec and Canada. I hope that the government will implement this recommendation.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

This issue means a lot to me. The Lac-Saint-Louis riding covers the westernmost part of the Island of Montreal, known as the West Island, nestled among a network of major rivers and bodies of water. These days, crossing one of these bodies of water via the Île-aux-Tourtes bridge is a little difficult, not because the bridge is under construction, but because a new bridge is being built. In the meantime, travelling from my riding to the riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges is very hard.

My riding is effectively surrounded by bodies of water on three sides: the Rivière des Prairies to the north, the St. Lawrence River to the south, and Lac des Deux Montagnes to the west. The Ottawa River flows into the Rivière des Prairies and Lac des Deux Montagnes and then into the St. Lawrence. This can be problematic at times because of sediment carried in by the Ottawa River. Some water in the St. Lawrence River turns brown at the point where it reaches my riding because of the Ottawa River sediment. The other part is fairly clear.

As a member of Parliament who pays close attention to what is happening around his riding, I have seen water levels change from

one year to the next for natural reasons. An order was issued not long ago concerning water regulation. The order states that natural phenomena should be what determines water levels. There are at least four or five boating and sailing clubs on the St. Lawrence River in my riding. The water is low some years and higher other years. That is a problem for people who have boats, who sail and engage in all kinds of other recreational activities. I am therefore very familiar with the situation on the river.

The river is not the same as it was 300 years ago. We sometimes forget, but the river has changed a lot. Think of the construction of Notre Dame Island at the Expo 67 site, when an artificial island was built right in the middle of the river. Obviously, the seaway has changed the river dynamics a great deal. The changes can be seen in a wonderful film by Quebec animation director Frédéric Back. He made an extraordinary film about the St. Lawrence River that shows the changes that have taken place over the years. There were no hydroelectric plants along the river 300 years ago. There have been a lot of changes, and what is currently happening with shoreline erosion is a more complex phenomenon than one might think.

• (1210)

By the way, I would like to acknowledge the work of the marine pilots. I know several. As members know, these pilots board a ship and pilot it along the river all the way to the Great Lakes. Once it reaches the Great Lakes, other marine pilots take over. They do extraordinary work navigating this river, whose contours can be rather tricky at times. What is more, the river is not very deep. Flying between Montreal and Toronto, we can see the bottom of the river from the plane. That may be one of the reasons waves have an impact on the shoreline.

The river has evolved a lot. It is an economic driver, and several members have raised that fact in their speeches. It is a waterway that has a huge economic impact, not just on Montreal and on Quebec's economy, but also on Ontario's economy and that of the rest of Canada as well. Accordingly, when we make decisions about navigation on the river, we have to consult the economic stakeholders. That obviously includes Quebec. The Government of Quebec has an interest in making sure its voice is heard.

We have also heard that shoreline erosion is not necessarily very easy to explain. It is not just a question of ship speeds or size. As I just said, the marine pilots do extraordinary work to ensure that passing ships have as little impact as possible on the shoreline and the natural environment of the river.

Incidentally, I would like to remind the House that the government, in co-operation with the Government of Quebec, asked that voluntary measures be implemented to reduce ship speeds. One might think that those measures would not have any impact because they were voluntary. However, I read that 98% of ships are complying with the new reduced speeds, which is quite something. Ships, guided by marine pilots, are doing what they can to minimize impacts.

*Routine Proceedings*

I mentioned this earlier in my question to my colleague from Victoria. When we were discussing the forest fires in Alberta at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, we heard that we never used to get the kind of winds that we are seeing today in the forests and on the river. That all goes back to climate change. We are in an unpredictable situation. It is unprecedented. We have to assess what is happening in the river because of human factors, such as shipping, but also because of environmental factors, especially those related to climate change.

The government assesses what is happening in the river to carefully target the right solutions. Let me give an example of a case where, thanks to sound scientific research, we avoided spending billions of dollars for nothing. Everyone is familiar with the Experimental Lakes Area, a natural laboratory in Ontario. It is home to experiments on pollution issues, which are conducted in real lakes. At one point, it was determined that nitrogen levels in waste water needed to be reduced and that billions upon billions of dollars would have to be spent to that end. Scientific research in the Experimental Lakes Area concluded that it was not nitrogen that was causing the problem. In the end, the billions of dollars did not need to be spent. We must be careful to arrive at the right scientific conclusions before taking action.

• (1215)

[English]

**Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his discussion about the importance of rivers, which obviously bracket his constituency on all sides.

The theme of the discussion today has been a lack of action by the Liberal government. I sit on the transport committee. This report had six recommendations that were supported by members from all parties, including the five Liberal members who sit on the committee, three of whom are from the Greater Montreal area.

We have noted the fact that there are existing budgets, resources and expertise, yet no action. The Liberals have had nine years, and the member just talked about the fact that we need to study more.

What is the holdup?

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Madam Speaker, I do not accept the premise that nothing has been done. I have a list of programs that are designed to help with the problem of eroding shorelines and I will name a couple.

One the government brought in, through a recent budget, is a natural infrastructure fund to support natural and hybrid infrastructure projects that can advance biodiversity goals. I know, for example, the city of Beaconsfield in my riding has applied under that program specifically to shore up some shoreline areas that have eroded.

Things are being done. There is a freshwater action plan, which is already on stream and is related to the initiative to create the Canada water agency. There is a lot going on, but it takes time.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am currently wrapping up a report

that we will soon be submitting to the government because there is a problem in my riding. Along both the Yamaska River and the Rivière Noire, shoreline erosion is problematic. The people of Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Pie and Saint-Damase have been telling me about this for years. Obviously, that has all kinds of impacts on the environment, but people are also telling me about property that has been destroyed by the waves. Wakesurfing is one of the biggest culprits. It is not exactly commercial shipping, but it matters.

Given that property values are plummeting, along with all the other problems, inconveniences and irritants, at first, I naively thought all we had to do was contact the government and have the department send its inspectors out to do what had to be done. I learned the hard way that I was in for about two and a half years of endless consultations, reports and investigations for small municipalities that do not have a lot of resources.

Is it normal that such an archaic approach is being taken and that, as we speak, my assistant is the one writing up a very lengthy report, or in other words, doing the work that public servants should be doing right now?

Is this what he calls a modern country that cares about the environment?

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Madam Speaker, I do not disagree. I think that we need to improve the way the public service works so that it responds more quickly to requests for information. I, too, often communicate with all sorts of departments and ask for information to guide my next steps. I am surprised at how slow the process is, and I think that we need to do everything we can to improve that.

This is not just a problem with the federal government. One simply has to go to the SAAQ to see how things work there. This is a problem inherent in all bureaucracies. We need to focus on that. I agree with my colleague.

• (1220)

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I have learned, through this report, just how complex the regulations are, given that there are municipal, provincial and federal regulations. One of the discussions mentioned in this report is the need for a multi-stakeholder approach.

Can the member share with us how important federal leadership will be to ensure that shorelines are better protected?

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Madam Speaker, there is no doubt about it. I think this is a model example of an issue where stakeholders need to come together, including indigenous communities.

I was at the INAN committee yesterday when representatives from the community of Kahnawake spoke about how it is their river and they never gave it up, and they need to be consulted properly. Yes, multi-stakeholder consultations are at the heart of the matter.

*Routine Proceedings*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, what we are talking about today is serious. Some people do not seem to realize what residents have been going through, and I do not mean lately, I mean since 1997. They watch big ships go by every day. It is a privilege they would not want to give up, because it is wonderful, but they are suffering the consequences. Year after year, they are seeing their land crumble away, but their property tax is not going down. They pay taxes and even though the land is smaller, they are not paying less.

They want to intervene. Most of them are even prepared to pay a lot of money. However, intervention is extremely complex and highly regulated. They would have to apply for permits. They would have to talk to one department and then talk to another department. They can intervene on their own land, but if the neighbour does not do anything, the water will get in through that neighbour's land and get underneath the structure. At the end of the day, the work will need to be redone or it will be completely ineffective. Worse yet, this can even harm a third neighbour.

A waterway is an ecosystem. It is a whole. If the riverbank is developed in one municipality, that development may have an impact three municipalities away. That is why a collaborative approach is needed.

That is why the Bloc Québécois has a hard time understanding how the federal government can so easily wash its hands of its responsibilities. Navigation is a federal responsibility. This is the government's responsibility. It established a program. It built structures in my riding in the 1960s and 1970s. Take the retaining wall in Berthierville, for example, which is now on the verge of collapsing into the water. The federal government built it. Then, in 1997, it said it would start being hands off and the community would just have to deal with it. As science and studies have evolved over time, we now know that these structures, known as grey infrastructure, may not be the best solution. They can speed up the flow of water, leading to repercussions elsewhere. This is common knowledge.

How can a G7 nation suddenly decide that, since cuts have to be made somewhere, this program should be cut and the people should be left to fend for themselves? What is more, the people being left to fend for themselves are Quebeckers, because the effects are being felt around Montreal and Lake Saint-Pierre. That is the message we are getting. Earlier, another member asked if there would be a stronger response if the effects were being felt in Ontario. I hope we are wrong in saying that, but the current situation certainly leads us to that conclusion.

Can the government take responsibility and coordinate a response? That is what this is all about. It is about coordinating the response so that we do not abandon our constituents and our small municipalities, which do not have a lot of financial resources.

I will talk about the event that led me to be so interested in this file and why there is now a Lanaudière-Mauricie St. Lawrence shoreline protection committee in my riding of Berthier—Maskinongé. It was created on the initiative of a constituent named Roy Grégoire. I thank him very much for his work. He launched the petition and brought people together. That was how the committee came about.

However, Berthier—Maskinongé was not the first to tackle this issue, because another member had already been working on it for many years and had done some of the work. I want to take this opportunity to commend my very esteemed colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, who has done a remarkable job. He demonstrated that earlier in his 20-minute speech. We could give him another 20 minutes and I am sure he could fill that time. We might even give him a third speaking slot of 20 minutes to fully explain to the people in the government what we have to do and what the problem is.

I cannot imagine how two opposition members found the time to meet with people, talk to them and conduct studies. We met with scientists at the universities in Montreal and Laval, in Quebec City, to understand how they are studying shoreline erosion, what new technologies are out there and what erosion control measures could be implemented.

● (1225)

Concrete walls may no longer be the answer, but there are things that can be done. How is it possible that we have a comprehensive understanding of what is happening, yet the government is not taking care of it? Come on.

A government leader asked me if we asked questions about this, as if it were our fault. Honestly, the committee worked very hard on this. We came up with serious, rigorous, science-backed recommendations. That is something we hear a lot in the House. The report was tabled a year and a half ago, and nothing has happened. Now we are being criticized for moving concurrence in this report in the House. I am sorry, but something has to be done.

I am working on another file in which nothing has been done for a year and a half. Bill C-282 is in the Senate. We are doing the same thing. We are applying pressure, but nothing is moving forward, and that is not right.

People need to understand shoreline erosion. I shouted out to Roy and my colleague. I want to shout out to the mayors in my riding who have also taken—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé. He will have three minutes and 40 seconds to continue his speech. I must interrupt him to make a statement.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

**The Speaker:** Yesterday, during question period, the Chair indicated that the Leader of the Opposition had used language directed at the Minister of Foreign Affairs that was deemed to be unparliamentary. In fact, it was very similar in nature to language used earlier this year by a member who accused the Leader of the Opposition of pandering to an odious regime. At the time, that member was asked to withdraw the comment.

*Routine Proceedings*

Therefore, yesterday, I asked that the Leader of the Opposition do the same, namely, to withdraw his comment at the earliest opportunity. To date, this has not happened. We will soon find ourselves at the time of day when the Leader of the Opposition normally undertakes one of his most important roles: leading question period. Members will recall that, when the Leader of the Opposition was himself the subject of unparliamentary language, to which I just referred, members of his caucus took great offence and made that perfectly clear to the Chair occupant. The Chair, very rightly, insisted on a withdrawal. As such, I am sure members can appreciate that I must do the same in the present circumstances.

[*Translation*]

Our parliamentary system entails abiding by the rules that members have made for themselves in the House and that they have entrusted to the Speaker and other Chair occupants to enforce.

Disregarding the authority of the Chair, who is tasked with enforcing these rules, has a corrosive effect on our proceedings. I would ask all members to reflect on this, especially the House officers for each party. Ultimately these situations also leave an increasingly negative impression for the public on the important work of the House and its members.

• (1230)

[*English*]

The Leader of the Opposition is an experienced member; he is well versed in our practices and procedures. He knows that, in our system, the role of the Leader of the Opposition is to ask questions of the ministry, ensure that it is held accountable for its actions and challenge its decisions. His role is not to make the government comfortable, quite the contrary; however, his actions must also be exercised within the existing boundaries of parliamentary decorum.

[*Translation*]

Over the past few months, there have been two occasions where he has not heeded the Speaker's rulings regarding unparliamentary language during question period. A first instance resulted in him being named and the second resulted in questions being removed from his party. Yesterday's events have resulted in a third instance.

[*English*]

The Leader of the Opposition should withdraw the comments he made yesterday during question period. If he is not willing to do so, the Chair will not recognize him for the remainder of today's sitting.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé has three minutes and 40 seconds to finish his intervention.

\* \* \*

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that it was necessary to interrupt me when I had just three minutes and 40 seconds left, but I will let it go.

I was thanking the mayors who stepped up and showed leadership. I thank Mr. Barthe, who invited me to Saint-Ignace-de-Loyola to show me that he had been forced to urgently repair a road without any financial support from the federal government or the provincial government. Without pre-approval, once the work is done, there is no chance of getting any money. It is just not possible. In his case, the road would have fallen into the water if the repairs had not been done. That is the situation: a small municipality with few resources is abandoned but still needs to invest its own money.

I thank André Villeneuve, mayor of Lanoraie. As soon as the committee was created, he took charge of operations, offered meeting rooms and rallied people to the cause. I also thank Alain Goyette, who is currently showing incredible leadership in putting all of this together. Thanks to him, things are finally moving.

Allow me to explain why this is important and why there is erosion. Structures have been built upstream to control the flow of water. Some of these structures are built near populated areas in my riding. They are called control weirs, and they are basically stone walls that were built to keep the water in the river, raise the water level and keep it high and constant by controlling the upstream dam and combining it with the Ottawa River. The water is always at the same level, and erosion occurs always at the same level.

No one can tell me that the St. Lawrence Seaway is not the cause of these major erosion problems. The two are directly related. These are structures. Government was asked to help with the work, but it said no because it cannot just throw money away like that. However, the government has the money to come in and work on the control weirs. Workers came this summer, and our mayors did not even know what was happening. These workers were working alongside the municipalities and, when asked, they said that Fisheries and Oceans Canada had sent them. The mayors then wrote to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to ask why these people were doing work in their municipalities.

The St. Lawrence Seaway is very important. The federal government is going to do some work there, but the mayors have to deal with the secondary repercussions and the hundred-year-old trees falling into the water. They can cry about it all they want, but no one cares. The workers and the government do not care. That is the situation right now.

Another minister, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, is currently looking at creating two reserves in the Lake Saint-Pierre archipelago, where ship speeds would be reduced, which is not a bad idea. Maybe those two departments could talk to each other? Maybe they could also talk to the third department, Transport Canada, about making ship speed restrictions mandatory rather than voluntary?

*Routine Proceedings*

There are all kinds of things that can be done, but everyone needs to work together to implement a comprehensive response to ensure that interventions in one place do not have a disastrous effect on the neighbours. That is why the federal government needs to step up, stop trying to take over provincial responsibilities so it can feel important, and just do its own job, in its own areas of jurisdiction, to support our citizens and our municipalities in protecting their shorelines, because they urgently need them to be better equipped to withstand erosion. Climate change is just getting started. It is far from being resolved. The climate will become increasingly irregular. People need help, and it is our responsibility to help them.

• (1235)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to talk about the importance of the issue at hand, and I brought up one issue that was a bit of a surprise, which is how long the report has been sitting and waiting. It was tabled 18 months ago, and the Bloc decided to bring it forward today. I thought it was interesting that, when I put that to one of the member's colleagues, I was told the report was tabled in April 2023 and that March was the last time the Bloc asked a question on the issue.

With the importance the Bloc has given it, why has it not been raised since the tabling of the report, which was a year and a half ago?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Speaker, unlike many others in the House, I will endeavour to be polite and show respect, which can take various forms.

This is outrageous. We are talking about a report that was prepared in committee in a serious way and submitted to the department. We expected to wait three months for something to happen, knowing how big the government is. However, a year and a half seems a long time. It is a bit like the thingamajig on the other side of the Hill, the Senate. It does not move at all. At some point, items have to be put back on the agenda.

Today, we are not being thanked for putting the topic back on the agenda, because it is important, after all, and because we are right that it is a federal responsibility that was sloughed off in 1997, not to mention that people need help. Instead, we are being told that it is our fault and that all we had to do was put it back on the agenda sooner. Come on. Give me a break.

Can we focus on the content? This is a serious report, prepared with tremendous diligence and based on scientific evidence. There are people living ankle-deep in water. The government needs to stop telling us to relax, though I think it is too late now. What we need now is action.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion on shoreline erosion. I will be sharing my time with—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We are in the question and comments period. Does the hon. member have a question?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I do not think the government has an emergency plan, just a plan to carry out studies and so forth.

Personally, I see this as an emergency. Does the hon. member agree?

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Speaker, indeed, the time for conducting studies has long passed. Incidentally, if they want studies, we can give them studies. The people in the municipalities in my riding funded the studies themselves because the federal government could not care less about this issue.

Is it not appalling to see small municipalities with a few thousand residents forced to invest their own money in research, because the government is doing nothing? They have to convince the government and demonstrate the urgency of the situation, even though the government is well aware, since it created the shoreline protection program in the 1960s and 1970s to maintain and secure the channel.

Let us be serious. The seaway brings in billions of dollars a year. Do not tell me that there is no money to help ordinary people who live along the seaway.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to set the record straight on certain things that have been said by members of the governing party.

The government pats itself on the back and keeps telling us that it has been working hard because it implemented voluntary speed limits for commercial shipping. When was that introduced? It was 20 years ago. For 20 years, the riverbanks have continued to erode.

How is it that, of all the shoreline erosion programs the government talks about, there is not one for individual citizens?

• (1240)

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Speaker, that is because the government excels in the art of talking without acting, in the art of giving the impression of being present and continuing to be there to work with people and support people. In the real world, however, there is no cheque coming in, no support being given, no work being done.

Let us get moving. I will co-operate with the government. I am sure my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères will co-operate too. If the leader of the government is ready, we can sit down, give him a rundown of the file and then get on with it.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House once again to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion on shoreline erosion. I will be splitting my time with the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

I would like to speak to the transportation committee study for a bit and talk about the government's response to it. Then I will share some of the factors that are affecting shoreline erosion and the urgency of the situation in my own riding. As always, I will come with helpful solutions that might be a good path forward.

First, the study identifies that the speed of vehicles is a factor, which is true. My riding of Sarnia—Lambton certainly experienced that, when the Coast Guard sped through the channel, broke the ice and broke the whole Sombra ferry. Instead of fixing it for \$2 million, the government, the member at the time, who is now in charge of public safety but was in charge of DFO, decided not to fix it. Instead it was decided to lose \$4 million a year of CBSA revenue, lose a border crossing and eventually lose \$6 million in a lawsuit over the whole thing. Speed is an issue and it needs to be brought down. Not everyone complies with the speed.

With the other factors, the government's response was delayed by 18 months. This is typical of the government. It does not really know how to do the business of government well. In the response, it is talking a lot about research and studies that need to be done. However, when the House is on fire, that is not the time to begin research on the accelerating factors in burning of different materials. That would be the time to take urgent action to put the fire out. That is where we are.

All day long we have heard members from different ridings talk about the urgency of shoreline erosion in their areas, and the government has been very deaf on this point. I hear all the time that it is climate change. When we talk about climate change, we need to understand what part of that is playing into shoreline erosion. From my engineering background, water levels increasing and decreasing makes a big difference in shoreline erosion.

In design engineering principles, we look at the 100-year cycle of water levels in places like the St. Clair River and the St. Lawrence Seaway. We look at 100-year storms. The problem is now we are seeing 100-year storms every couple of weeks, so that has greatly exacerbated the problem. In addition to that, we are not able to deal with it.

In the Great Lakes area, we have the infrastructure in place in Niagara that is supposed to maintain the water levels in the Great Lakes. However, that infrastructure only has the capacity of changing the level by one inch per month. With the inches and inches of rainwater that we are seeing and the fluctuations there, we just do not simply have the infrastructure to address water levels, and that is making the situation worse.

In addition to that, there is not always good engineering design put in place. In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, there is a stretch of beach between Canatara Park and Brights Grove. It is all very homogeneous. In the stretch from Canatara Park to the midpoint at Murphy, the shoreline protection has been properly engineered. The groins are 100 feet apart. They are long enough, tall enough and made of adequate materials, so there is no shoreline erosion in evidence there. However, what has happened on the next stretch of beach is that people, as they built their property, decided to put something in place that was not properly engineered. They have

huge issues to the point that in Brights Grove the road was falling down right next to Lake Huron. They had to close it and do an emergency repair.

Since 2015, when I was elected, I have been trying to negotiate to get the \$150 million that is needed in Sarnia—Lambton to address its issues. With three levels of government, the revolving door of ministers who have handled infrastructure and the lack of funding that somebody could actually apply for and get funding for shoreline erosion, the government has been all talk and no action on this file.

● (1245)

There are issues downriver in my riding, in St. Clair township, with a lot of low-level housing getting flooded. It is not just a St. Clair township thing. We see it in Gatineau every year with the Gatineau floods. There is a huge issue there.

It is not that the solutions are unknown. We know how to put in aggregate rock. We know what the better things are to put in some areas versus others and what to do for people, but we need to have a holistic solution. In one area in my riding, which is a rather wealthy area, landowners are losing 30 feet to 50 feet of their land every year from shoreline erosion. Owners are spending \$50,000 and \$100,000 apiece to put in their own seawall, but then that passes the problem down to the next neighbour. What is needed is a holistic solution, which could be funded jointly with municipalities, individuals and the federal government. The province has a role to play, but doing nothing and letting this piecemeal thing continue to happen is certainly not a solution.

When it comes to what we ought to do, we oftentimes hear the Liberal government say that it is “seized” with this solution. Again from an engineering perspective, a motor that is seized means it is not moving. That is exactly what we are seeing from the Liberal government, which is that it is not moving and not taking any action. It is not acceptable.

If we look to the solutions that the Liberals want to put in place, they have decided, again, that we need another committee to distribute another fund. I do not know how many times they have to repeat the same behaviour before they recognize that putting a whole bunch of Liberal appointees onto a committee to administer a fund is a disaster.

Let us start with the Infrastructure Bank: \$35 billion of infrastructure money was taken from municipalities and put into a committee to administer it. No projects came out the other end, but everybody was getting a great salary. It was a terrible idea.



*Routine Proceedings*

On the sustainable green fund, the Liberals wanted another committee to distribute the billion dollars in funds. Here we are today not able to do any government business because of the scandalous 186 conflicts of interest, people giving money from the committee to their own companies, as well potentially to the companies of cabinet ministers. It is a disaster.

The suggestion that we should do this is a bad idea. The Liberals are suggesting the same thing for Bill C-63. Instead of addressing the exploitation of children online, which is a serious offence, they want to create a parallel Liberal-appointed committee that would look at these issues. The committee would not have the ability to do anything in terms of criminal consequence, but it would make everybody feel better, and everybody would get better paid. That is not a solution, and I do not recommend it here at all.

This increase in people does not necessarily give us a better result. We have seen a 40% increase in public sector employees, but we do not see a corresponding improvement in response times from CRA or from immigration, from any of these things. In fact, we actually see worse results.

None of the solutions that have been put forward are the right ones. There is urgency, not just in my riding. We heard of other ridings for which this is urgent. I would be remiss if I did not speak up for former MP Bill Casey, who, when he was here, always talked about the linkage between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. This is critical infrastructure, and it is going to be washed away. This will be a huge issue for all the people living in those regions, and it is not being tackled with the urgency needed.

We need to use the funds we have. We have an infrastructure fund. Could we use it to build things? Could we use it for shoreline erosion? Every time someone applies for one of these funds, it is like the fund is a little boutique, where people need to have this, that or something else. Each riding has its own needs and each riding knows what to do about it. Why do we not take the existing infrastructure money we have and work with the municipalities to address shoreline erosion?

• (1250)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this government has invested literally hundreds of millions, going into billions, of dollars into Canada's infrastructure. These are far greater amounts than any other previous government in the last 40 years or so.

Infrastructure dollars means Ottawa working with provinces, much like Ottawa is working with the Province of Quebec, through a committee. I know the member does not like committees, but there is a Quebec government and Canadian government committee looking at the issue we are talking about today.

However, working with other levels of government and providing infrastructure dollars is one way monies can be allocated. To try to give the false impression that there is no direct or indirect funding for the protection of our shorelines is misleading. I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on the Canadian government working with the Quebec government in dealing with this issue.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, he has said that there could be money coming forward from this Quebec committee, but I have just heard all my Quebec colleagues saying that there is no money flowing anywhere to do anything real about the infrastructure. That is the problem. The committee members are probably getting rich but nobody else is.

Unless there is some kind of selection process that excludes Conservative ridings, the reality is that I have been working with Catherine McKenna, to start with, and every infrastructure minister since, with my municipality and the provincial government, trying to get the \$150 million we need. We have the solutions. We have the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority reports, we have it all, but we cannot get the money. Until we get the money, we cannot solve the issue, and that is the problem.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will take this opportunity to elaborate on the thought I tried to express briefly earlier and to ask my colleague a question.

Some government members said there was money to protect the shoreline, but the truth is, that money is often spent on a pilot project here or a research project there, or it is paid out on an ad hoc basis when a city applies for a program.

The thing is, individuals cannot do anything when their land is taken from them. None of the existing programs have funding for that. It absolutely has to go through some organization. Individuals who want to take the initiative to protect their land from the damage caused by passing ships, among other things, are in a tough spot. They are in a tough spot because they would have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars out of pocket even though the cause of the problem is, as we know, under the government's jurisdiction. The government is washing its hands of it. The government is not dealing with it. The problem is, if an individual protects their land, but their neighbour does not, the situation will get worse for the neighbour.

I have a question for my colleague. Why is there no shared vision and no leadership on the part of this government?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, that is a good question. We have a similar situation in my riding. A constituent installed something on his property and it affected the neighbour's property next door. It is very difficult to get funding. The Liberals are all talk and no action. It is always the same problem. They have spent a lot of money, but there is no infrastructure to fight shoreline erosion. That is the problem.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There is time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, it is hard to have a brief question because the hon. member and friend from Sarnia made so many telling points, particularly remembering Bill Casey, the former member in this place for Cumberland—Colchester.

Right after hurricane Katrina in 2005, I remember him speaking to me about the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change having identified the two most vulnerable places in North America, those being the Chignecto peninsula and isthmus, connecting New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and the area around New Orleans.

I would point to her comments on extreme weather events. Due to climate change, the Great Lakes are experiencing both low water levels that are out of historical norms and high water levels and extreme energy levels that all contribute to erosion.

I wish her continued good luck in getting infrastructure funding.

• (1255)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is correct. From 2005, somebody who was actually a member on the government benches was unable to get an urgent infrastructure issue addressed. That just speaks to the problem and the fact that there are a lot of studies, tons of studies done on his area and tons of solutions proposed, all engineered, but no money available. I will continue to press, as I am sure the rest of my fellow colleagues will.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Tip O'Neill, a couple of decades ago, said that "all politics is local", and the debate we are having here in the chamber today certainly echoes that. The Bloc has brought forward a committee report that was done a year and a half ago regarding continued concerns about the Liberal government's inaction when it comes to shoreline erosion, in this case particularly along the St. Lawrence River. However, I know there are other bodies of water and issues when it comes to protecting our shorelines and the health of rivers in this country.

I am proud to stand up and give a perspective from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, which borders an important part of the St. Lawrence River. For many years, our community has been struggling to get answers, funding and support to address a growing concern.

There are a few things I want to acknowledge as I begin. The local leadership has helped put this issue on the map and quantified the seriousness of the shoreline erosion happening in our part of the St. Lawrence River. There is the Great River Network, the River Institute and many other groups. I am also thinking of Chris Moran, a long-time family friend from Mariatown in the municipality of South Dundas. They have been on the front lines in trying to put the federal government's attention on the need to remediate and address this issue.

They have worked together over the course of the last few years to quantify this by studying points in Mariatown, just west of Morrisburg, and on Jacobs Island in Akwesasne. In partnership with different groups, like the River Institute, the municipalities have done some aerial imagery. They have also put instruments in the river itself to test the impact that shipping traffic is having in some

of the more narrow channels of the St. Lawrence River. The conclusion is clear from the data they have presented. They have substantiated what we have known for many years, which is that there is a lack of leadership in acknowledging the issue.

I will point out the parallel between the St. Lawrence River and Highway 401. Over the course of the last 40, 50 or 60 years, since the 401 has been in existence in Ontario, which runs parallel to the St. Lawrence River, we have seen modernization. We have seen bridge rehabilitations and replacements. We have seen bridge structures change as they have been replaced to allow for what is happening next, which is the widening of the 401. The Province of Ontario will be adding in a third lane, including through my part of eastern Ontario. The St. Lawrence River is right beside the 401, and in that same time, our country has grown, our population has grown and our economy has grown. However, we have not seen modernization to address the increased number of ships passing through and the size and speed of those ships, which is now causing damage in many parts of the St. Lawrence River.

The part that is frustrating is that this report was done a year and a half ago, and the transport and infrastructure committee of the House of Commons confirmed what everyone along the St. Lawrence River has known for years, which is that shoreline erosion is a major issue, the government is not providing infrastructure funds and, most importantly, the federal level is not providing the leadership needed to address this issue. In a few different ways this is a problem, because there are many different federal departments.

The Liberals are the best at this. After we debate this report from a year and a half ago that says action is needed, there will be no action and no update. When Liberal members spoke about their updates and their perspective on this, they said they had given a lot of money to infrastructure over the years. They knew this debate was coming today and knew they were going to be called out and challenged for their lack of action, but they could not name one single infrastructure project they have funded in the last nine years that has helped address shoreline erosion, or anything specific they have done to address the issue. The only thing they do, which is typical of the Liberal government, is say they are having consultations and have a committee to talk about it.

The report was tabled after a committee talked about it and made recommendations. What is needed now is federal leadership. However, a year and a half later, another report has been done with no follow-through. In fact, the Liberals could not give any coherent, specific update on this issue, which tells us everything we need to know about how the federal government is truly broken.

• (1300)

The other issue we have is that the federal government needs to get its act together. It says that the provinces and municipalities are partners and players on this issue. However, the federal government has not even gotten itself organized.

Here is a point of reflection: What minister and department have the lead on the St. Lawrence River and the health of our rivers? I could not say. Transport Canada, one federal department and minister, has some say in some parts and jurisdictions of the river. We have Fisheries and Oceans Canada, another minister and department. We have Public Services and Procurement Canada. We have Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, another department and minister. We also have Global Affairs Canada and the foreign affairs minister involved.

Another big issue is the IJC, the International Joint Commission. It works to regulate water levels, which have been a major issue in our part of the St. Lawrence River, Lake St. Lawrence. If that was not enough, there was a suggestion a while ago, during this report, that the Canada Water Agency of the federal government should have some sort of lead.

Here we have six different ministers and departments and nobody is taking the lead. The federal government is saying it is having meetings with provinces and municipalities and it wants to study this further, but the government cannot even get its own house in order when it comes to which department, which part of the federal government, should take a singular, focused lead on the health and vitality of the St. Lawrence River, specifically addressing shoreline erosion. It has not figured that out after being in office for nine years.

The government brags about all the money it has spent “directly or indirectly”. That was a quote from this morning. It has spent billions of dollars, so directly or indirectly it has probably helped the St. Lawrence River. However, the government cannot even tangibly say how, after it doubled the national debt to \$1.2 trillion. It has increased year-over-year spending, annual spending, by \$151 billion. The Liberals spend \$151 billion more per year now than when they came into office nine years ago. That is \$10,000 more per year per Canadian family, and they cannot point to anything they have done about the issue of soil erosion and the leadership they say they are trying to provide when it comes to shoreline erosion.

My part of the St. Lawrence River is a good example. There is no leadership to even coordinate a coherent response. At the end of the day, which people are suffering when we have issues of shoreline erosion? It is private property owners, who are out hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the municipal infrastructure, beaches and waterfront enjoyed by the community. There is no leadership or coordination at all from the federal government year after year.

What we said as Conservatives when contributing to this report is that if the government is spending \$150 billion more per year and our national debt has been doubled, surely there should be existing programs. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was used by the government when it came in, allocating over \$1.3 billion to it. It has now suspended all that and no projects were done, but consultants and bureaucracies got rich and got ahead.

We are not seeing frontline results after years and years of neglect on this issue. At the end of the day, we need more leadership and need the federal government to step up, get coordinated and get some things done, not do another committee report and study.

### *Routine Proceedings*

• (1305)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion.

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, we would like a recorded division.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands are very concerned and have asked that this petition be presented, and I imagine that members from all sides of the House hear from their constituents to the same degree. The undersigned citizens of Canada bringing forward this petition ask that the federal government and the House of Commons work with all orders of government, particularly the provinces and territories, to come to a holistic and fair solution to Canada's family doctor shortage.

#### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of the constituents of Durham who are concerned about limited, unreliable and non-existent cellular service. The petition raises concerns over public safety, consumer protection and business competitiveness. We look forward to the government's response.

#### PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today I rise to table a petition with nearly 100 signatures that was submitted by Burnaby Firefighters IAFF Local 323, with a shout-out to B.C. firefighters and to firefighters right across this country.

### *Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners are asking for Parliament to address an urgent issue impacting the health and safety of firefighters across Canada. The petition calls for an immediate action to ban per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, otherwise known as PFAS, in firefighter gear and firefighting foam.

PFAS are man-made chemicals resistant to heat, water and oil, but their durability comes at a significant cost. Scientific evidence links these substances to severe health risks, including cancer, putting firefighters, who already face hazardous conditions, at greater risk. Research shows that PFAS can accumulate in the body, leading to serious health issues. Alarmingly, firefighters face a higher cancer risk than the general population.

We must mitigate these risks by regulating what we can control in their working conditions. Several countries have restricted PFAS use. Canada must follow suit. Our firefighters deserve gear free from toxic chemicals. Let us all protect those who risk their lives for us.

#### AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure that I table yet another petition reflecting on the desire of many of my constituents to see additional international flights, in particular going from Winnipeg to New Delhi or to Europe.

With the growth of our Indo-Canadian community and many others, we have seen an increased demand for travelling abroad. The petitioners are hoping the federal government will encourage the future growth of international flights, which could be done in many different ways. However, at the very least, let us discuss and raise the issue on the floor of the House of Commons. That is what they are hoping to achieve.

#### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to present a number of petitions in the House today.

The first petition calls on the Government of Canada to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. The petitioners note that after eight years, it is clear that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. The petitioners further believe that the failed Prime Minister and his failed NDP-Liberal government have increased the cost of everything and that crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are filling our streets due to the failed policies of the Prime Minister and his government.

The petitioners ask the government to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. They also want to see an immediate non-confidence vote.

I present this petition on behalf of my constituents without commenting on it with my personal views one way or the other.

• (1310)

#### ERITREA

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is regarding the brutal regime in Eritrea. Petitioners raise a number of different concerns related to the actions of that regime. They highlight how

Eritrea has been ruled by an authoritarian, brutal dictator, under a totalitarian system, for the last 30 years, with no constitution, no election, no parliament, no freedom of the press and no freedom of movement and association.

Petitioners identify the large number of people who have left Eritrea as a result of the repression. They also identify efforts at foreign interference in Canada and other places by the Eritrean government. Petitioners also want to draw attention to the way that the Eritrean regime collaborates with Vladimir Putin and supports the Russian government's colonial activities in Africa.

The specific asks of the petition, therefore, are for the Government of Canada to engage political and human rights activists and pro-democracy groups, to take a leadership role among western allies, to challenge the Eritrean dictator's malicious conspiracy with Vladimir Putin, and to investigate instances of foreign interference of Eritrea in Canada and take appropriate action in response.

They also would like to highlight the case of a number of imprisoned journalists and parliamentarians, specifically Dawit Isaak, Petros Solomon, Mahmoud Ahmed Sherifo, Haile Woldense, Ogbe Abraha, Hamid Himid, Saleh Idris Kekya, Estifanos Seyoum, Berhane Ghebregabiher, Astier Fesehazion, Germano Nati, Beraki Gebreselassie, and other political prisoners.

Furthermore, the petitioners want the government to strengthen sanctions against human rights abusers in Eritrea.

#### NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, next I am tabling a petition challenging the government's approach to natural health products. Petitioners are very concerned by how Liberal government policies could threaten access to natural health products through new rules with higher costs and fewer products available on store shelves.

The concern is that low-income Canadians in particular will be at a disadvantage as they seek to protect their health through natural health products, and that businesses that create and sell natural health products will be disadvantaged by the burdensome regulatory approach that the government is taking. Petitioners highlight in particular how the latest Liberal omnibus budget gave the government substantial new powers in terms of arbitrary action against natural health products.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to reverse the changes made in the last Liberal budget regarding natural health products. Petitioners are supportive of a Conservative private member's bill that would in fact reverse those changes.

#### MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the next petition is regarding proposals that have been heard at committee for the expansion of euthanasia to include children. Petitioners are opposed to the expansion of Canada's euthanasia regime to facilitate the death of children within our medical system. Petitioners say that the proposal for the legalized killing of infants in particular is deeply disturbing to Canadians, and that infanticide is always wrong.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to allow the killing of children.

#### FINANCIAL ADVISERS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, next I am tabling a petition highlighting some concerns from financial advisers. Petitioners say that financial advisers, while providing a qualified and professional service to their clients, are currently ineligible to individually incorporate; this causes them to be significantly disadvantaged, in effect, when they are taxed, especially in comparison to similar and related professionals. They note that stakeholders have brought attention to these legal and regulatory discrepancies and also to specific proposals to resolve them.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to act immediately with every means at its disposal to ensure that financial advisers are allowed to individually incorporate and that they are treated accordingly in regard to federal taxation. They also call on the government to actively promote this cause in working with all provinces and territories to make the same allowance and apply the same treatment to financial advisers within their jurisdiction.

● (1315)

#### VENEZUELA

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the next petition deals with human rights issues in Venezuela. I will note that the petition was prepared and certified prior to some of the latest events, so it deals with the issue of political prisoners and does not mention the outcome of the last election. No doubt, petitioners would like to see the Government of Canada recognize the real results of that election, the opposition victory, and join our allies in doing so and maximizing pressure on the government of Venezuela to recognize those results as well.

The particular asks of this petition are for Canada to advocate for the release of political prisoners with close ties to Canada, particularly Ígbert José Marín Chaparro and Oswaldo Valentín García Palomo; to make calling for their release central in any discussions with the Venezuelan government; and to request the release and, further, the return to Canada, of these two individuals due to their strong family ties, before any concessions are given to Venezuela, such as any sanctions release and the reopening of mutual embassies or economic agreements.

#### *Routine Proceedings*

#### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling relates to the Liberal government's feminist international assistance policy. The petitioners highlight the Auditor General's report, which shows that the Liberal approach to international development for women and girls has been criticized by the Auditor General for failing to measure results.

The petitioners further note that this policy has shown a lack of respect for cultural values and autonomy of women in the developing world by supporting organizations that violate local laws and push western priorities at the expense of local development priorities, such as clean water, access to basic nutrition and economic development. The petitioners further argue that the Muskoka initiative launched by the previous Conservative government involved historic investments in the well-being of women and girls around the world, emphasizing value for money and ensuring that investments were in priorities identified by local communities.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to align international development spending with the approach taken in the Muskoka initiative, focusing international development dollars on meeting the basic needs of vulnerable women around the world, rather than pushing ideological agendas that conflict with local values in developing countries. They also want to see an approach that actually constructively measures outcomes.

● (1320)

#### WOMEN'S SHELTERS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, next, I am tabling a petition regarding cuts the government has made to women's shelters. Women's shelters are sadly seeing an increase in demand.

The petitioners note that the high cost of living and the housing crisis have made it harder for women and children fleeing a violent home to find a safe place to live. Further, the petitioners say that, at a time when the government is dramatically increasing spending on bureaucracy and consultants, it is cutting millions of dollars from women's shelters.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to restore the funding to women's shelters that was cut.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to let the hon. member know that one of his colleagues is trying to table a petition as well. I do not know how many more petitions the hon. member has, but there are only two minutes left.

#### CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I do have many more, but I will limit myself to one additional petition.

*Privilege*

This petition, which I am tabling today, raises concern about the politicization of charitable status determinations by the government. In particular, the petitioners are concerned about a 2021 platform commitment that the Liberals made to deny the charitable status of organizations that have opinions about abortion that are different from the Liberal Party's opinion. The petitioners note that this proposal would jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party approach to these issues.

The petitioners also note that the government has previously applied a values test to discriminate against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program. They say that charities and other not-for-profit organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of their political views. The petitioners call on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status on a politically and ideologically neutral basis.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the 48th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The community of Swan River is overwhelmed by the extreme levels of crime because of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime laws, such as Bill C-5 and Bill C-75.

Jail has become a revolving door of repeat offenders, as Bill C-75 allows violent offenders to be in jail in the morning and back on the street the same day, and Bill C-5 allows criminals to serve their sentences from home. The people of Swan River see crime in the streets every day, and that is why they are calling for jail, not bail, for violent, repeat offenders.

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

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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.):** Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1325)

[English]

## PRIVILEGE

## REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, for anyone just tuning in now, I will recap the issue.

The Liberals chose a group of well-connected elites to give out money on behalf of the government. Those chosen elites then gave the money to companies they either owned or had a financial interest in. When these acts of blatant corruption were reported to the Liberal minister, Liberals tried to cover it up. Parliament investigated the corruption and the House ordered the government to hand over all documents to the RCMP.

The Communist-praising Prime Minister decided he did not need to listen to Parliament. His government refused to hand over all the documents without redactions. Now we are here debating a motion calling on the government to respect the will of Canadians, who elected this Parliament. We are not going to stop debating this motion until the government hands over the documents. To do anything less would mean throwing the towel in on parliamentary democracy.

How do we think this will end? Do we think Canadians are going to rise up in protest that the government's terrible agenda is not sailing through? Do Liberals imagine the Liberal Party base forming a massive convoy of luxury SUVs to come to Ottawa? Do they think a long trail of EVs leaving from Rosedale, the Glebe and Westmount will come riding to their rescue? That is an adorable little fantasy that the Liberals have over there, but it is time for a safe supply of reality.

Most Canadians oppose the government. They oppose its plan to censor Canadians. They oppose its plan to increase taxes. They oppose its plan to ban plastic food packaging. They oppose its plan to ban livestock farming. They oppose the preaching, hectoring and anti-Canadian attitude that comes out of the government. Canadians want to see the government defeated. It cannot happen soon enough.

The scandal involving the Liberals' green slush fund is just the tip of the iceberg. As I mentioned in my speech yesterday, the Liberals chose a group of well-connected elites to hand out money on behalf of the government. Those chosen elite then gave the money to companies they either owned or had a financial interest in.

Instead of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, we now have the local journalism initiative. One difference between the conflict-of-interest scandal at SDTC and the conflict-of-interest scandal with the local journalism initiative is that SDTC was accountable to Parliament through a minister. That is why employees were able to blow the whistle to the deputy minister.

The Liberals did not put the local journalism initiative into an independent agency reporting to Parliament. Instead, they gave the money to lobbyist organizations that campaigned for the cash in the first place. The lobbyists then appointed the owners and executives of media outlets to hand out the funds to the chosen media outlets. Those owners and executives then gave the cash to their own companies. These would be the same media owners and executives who control the media lobbyist associations.

Whether it is SDTC, the local journalism initiative or a billion bucks for WE Charity, it is always the same thing. The Liberals are handing out other people's money to the well-connected Laurentian elite in a circle of self-dealing. Canadians are sick and tired of the corrupt, incompetent government. It needs to hand over the documents to the RCMP. Then it is will be time to call the election Canadians badly need.

Senator Plett, my colleague in the other place, recently gave a rundown of all the government's scandals. He said:

The first scandal in the top three is the SNC Lavalin affair. This started when the Liberals snuck a change to the Criminal Code into the budget bill to allow the government to make deals with corporations found guilty of corruption. Again, pre-empting: "We know there will be corrupt people, so let's find a way out for them." This came after months of intense lobbying by SNC Lavalin officials

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the very least, I always find my colleague's speeches interesting. They are not necessarily factual, but they are interesting.

The question I have for her is related to her opening statement, which was trying to purport the facts. For example, she indicated that we have SDTC, an organization that went awry, which is actually at arm's-length from the government, I must add. She gave the impression that the government did nothing, which is just not true. There were two internal investigations. The board has been replaced, and we have a freeze on new funding. That is action.

Why should we walk over the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to solve an appetite of the Conservative Party in its desire for an election, when we have the RCMP and the Auditor General expressing concern as to the Conservative tactic the Conservatives are using today?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know what Charter of Rights he thinks is being impeded, but let us go to what he started to ask, which was to tell us about the actions that have already been taken. They froze things.

In this instance, SDTC had existed since the early 2000s, and it had run fairly unproblematically until the government took power. It was providing money to companies that provided jobs and grew into multi-million dollar businesses. Because that money was frozen, we now have several companies that were ready to launch into other countries, based on that income. Instead, they ended up having to pay extra taxes and leave Canada altogether. That is one of the implications of the actions that were taken.

In terms of the documents, we need those. We only know about the \$400 million that has been misspent out of a billion dollars allocated every year. I know that they do not want those pages released, but there is so much more corruption to uncover.

### *Privilege*

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech. She was interrupted at the end, just as she was starting to share with Canadians the large number of scandals that the Liberal government has been engaged in over the last nine years. Perhaps she would wish to continue her speech and regale us with more of these scandals, which have essentially brought the government to its knees.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I mentioned SNC-Lavalin, and I thank my colleague for being able to continue this. There are all of these scandals, this litany of scandals, from the several allegations of the corruption of officials in Canada and around the globe for the engineering construction firm SNC-Lavalin to the Prime Minister himself applying pressure to the former attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould, to sign an agreement to let SNC-Lavalin off the hook.

These are a few of the many reasons why Canadians no longer trust the government. The only solution is to call a carbon tax election, so the people of Canada can throw the government out and make the decision known for everyone.

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is not something that happens every day, but, ironically, my colleague from the Conservative Party stole my question. I wanted to ask her to keep going with her list of scandals. This is funny because it does not often happen. That was honestly the question I wanted to ask.

The Conservatives are filibustering right now. That is fine. However, there are plenty of reasons for us to be questioning the current process, especially the one we use to get legislation through. Does my colleague not think it is time to put the motion to a vote and force the government to produce the documents? Then we could get other work done before the election.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that one of my colleagues in the Bloc would ask why we even need to continue demanding these documents gives me pause, and I want to explain further the SNC-Lavalin situation. The former attorney general was not of the opinion that SNC-Lavalin met the criteria in the provisions added to the Criminal Code just months before, but the Prime Minister sent his most trusted adviser and his Clerk of the Privy Council to make it clear to the minister that she had better obey or else. Minister Wilson-Raybould had more credibility than anyone in the PMO, and she did not budge. For that reason, she was shuffled into Veterans Affairs, opening the position of Attorney General to David Lametti. He did not have the same moral compass as Ms. Wilson-Raybould; he was just happy to be in cabinet, so he signed whatever paper the Prime Minister put in front of him. When this scandal became public, the Prime Minister claimed that what was in *The Globe and Mail* was false. Of course, it was not false; the Prime Minister lied, and his office tried to ruin the reputation of Ms. Wilson-Raybould in the media.

*Privilege*

**The Speaker:** There is a point of order; I can imagine what it is going to be.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, using the word “lie” is unparliamentary, and the member should have edited it out of her speech.

**The Speaker:** I will just ask the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to please withdraw that.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that word. I thank my biggest fan in the Liberal government for pointing that out.

To finish up with my colleague from the Bloc, it is important that we drive the message home. We must make sure that every Canadian who has tuned in to Parliament, or not, hears by word of mouth how corrupt the government is. We should not let another piece of business go until this has been addressed properly. The only way to address it overall, so that everyone has a say, is to have a carbon tax election now.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke may be surprised that I think the chronology of events as she describes it is accurate, with one exception. As someone who is in the Green Party, I know the word “green” gets thrown around as if we had something to do with this. Obviously, we do not. There is no word of dispute from me as to the chronology, except for this: We do not know that the people who were put on that board had any connection to any political party at all. In fact, the chair of the board, who egregiously violated conflict of interest standards, was an adviser to Jim Flaherty, much-admired former minister of finance under Stephen Harper, and to Stephen Harper himself. In other words, like many people in business in Canada, this person seems to have made sure that they had favours with many different parties and were not associated with any one in particular.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, the member is sticking up for the Liberals and propping them up. This probably explains why, during one of my constituency clinics in Renfrew, I had a couple come all the way from her riding to make an appointment to see me. They had grown up in Renfrew and, from time to time, they had seen the writings that we had handed out to their family members. They wanted to tell me first-hand that they wanted a Conservative riding represented where they live. They want a Conservative to be elected in her riding, and they want her out. This is why.

• (1335)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the appointment process, would the member agree that we would have to change it? In the past, in the Harper administration, we had Bruce Carson, who was also incarcerated. We have a whole series of other appointments that have problems, and then we have the current situation that has taken place.

Would more transparency for appointments be something Conservatives would support, which would then also be tabled in the House of Commons here when we make these decisions?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, the best step to take at this point is to have the documents produced, so we can see how deep

the corruption goes. We should then have the member who just spoke and his party stop propping up the government and have a carbon tax election so we can get to work on what needs to be done. Then we can deal with the appointments.

\* \* \*

• (1340)

[Translation]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** Before we resume debate, the Chair would like to return to the events from March 20, 2024. The member for Etobicoke Centre had used language that was deemed unparliamentary by the Chair. The member was asked to withdraw his comments and apologize. He refused to do so and, as such, has not been recognized by the Chair since then.

[English]

Given other events from earlier today, including sanctions imposed on another member for similar comments, the Chair is now ready to move on and allow the member for Etobicoke Centre to again participate in debate as of tomorrow, October 9. The Chair now considers the matter closed.

I thank all members for their attention.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRIVILEGE**

## REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to a privilege motion that is very important to me because the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, of which I am vice-chair, is right in the middle of its study on Sustainable Development Technology Canada, following the Auditor General's report.

I will start by putting my cards on the table. Over the past few days, people have said that there was obstruction going on in Parliament and that this privilege motion was just a way to keep the government from moving forward or doing anything. I just wanted to mention this. This is not just about the primacy of Parliament. For starters, even if the government had a majority, it would have been wrong, because it is the duty of this Parliament to keep an eye on what the government is doing. There is a clear separation of powers. Parliament must be able to deal with important issues. I will delve into some aspects of that. Parliament must be able to ensure that the government is governing effectively, in the best-case scenario, or at least that there is no corruption. In this case, there appears to have been corruption.



*Privilege*

This not just a question of the primacy of Parliament. Democracy is based on trust. The government has repeatedly demonstrated that people should not necessarily trust its work. Since it refuses to hand over documents to Parliament, it appears to have something to hide. What does the government have to hide? It is all well and good to shelter behind the virtue of keeping the RCMP and the Auditor General independent. Of course, no one questions that. However, it is important for our duty as parliamentarians that all the requested documents be given to the law clerk and parliamentary counsel.

At this point, the Liberals seem to be trying to hide potentially damning evidence. Some will say that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry acted quickly and SDTC was abolished. In fact, SDTC, which was created in 2001, was abolished because the Auditor General's report had identified so many problems that it was better to scrap SDTC altogether. Excellent.

The minister also arranged to have the board of directors changed completely. Now there are only three people on the board. I should point out that one of them appeared before the committee yesterday. Despite her \$1,500-a-day salary, she was unable to answer any questions clearly and precisely. However, she has been in the position for four months. It took several points of order and reactions from the committee chair for the witness to simply say that she did not know the answer or to finally agree to answer parliamentarians' questions.

The SDTC executives were not affected. The Auditor General's report identified some issues, but so far, not much has happened in committee. However, a lot of things were identified in that report. The executives were not affected, but the former president and CEO resigned at the end of 2023. Apparently, she is now enrolled in a very expensive program at Harvard.

I will give some examples of very problematic matters that are tied to this former president and CEO that the House should also be seized with. Other executives who are implicated in the Auditor General's report still have not appeared at committee because they are on sick leave. We respect that, but it is preventing us from moving forward with our study. What we are asking for in exchange for the fact that we cannot receive key witnesses is the government's co-operation. However, the government is still refusing to provide Parliament with the documents that would enable it to be fully informed when it deals with the matter.

The government tells us that we must look ahead and consider everything that has been done. However, when a board member who is meant to oversee the transition is incapable of answering parliamentarians' questions, we have serious questions about that transition, the reasons for the transition and the government's willingness to actually recover this money and invest it in projects that are genuinely eligible.

Here is an example of a question the board member was unable to answer yesterday. It had to do with SDTC's response to one of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report. No, SDTC did not agree with all of the recommendations. There was just one recommendation that it partially agreed with. It was this:

Sustainable Development Technology Canada should reassess projects approved during the audit period to ensure that they met the goal and objectives of the Sustainable Development Technology Fund and all its eligibility criteria.

This recommendation seems quite clear, yet it has only been partially accepted. Why is that? It is because SDTC hires consultants to come in and review all projects. Yesterday, the board member was unable to assure me that, if the Auditor General had designated a project as ineligible, it would remain ineligible. I was told that if consultants then came in and said the project was eligible, they would probably win that one. That means that SDTC is not even in a position to accept all the Auditor General's recommendations and agree that certain projects deemed ineligible by the Auditor General of Canada are in fact deemed ineligible.

There is more. The contracts have been drawn up so that they cannot be broken unless the company commits fraud. This means that, in the case of the ineligible project I just described, the company simply applied. It was told that there was money in the fund and that all it had to do was apply. The company did not commit fraud. It was SDTC that accepted ineligible projects, even in cases of conflict of interest. People were friends with company representatives. No problem, the company gets money. However, the contract cannot be broken. This means that projects deemed ineligible by the Auditor General, and which could be deemed ineligible by the consultants, will continue to receive public money. These are ineligible projects, projects that do not comply with the contribution agreements.

That means things are worse than we thought. Not only are they unable to get back funds from ineligible projects, they stopped funding a lot of projects. Incidentally, the board member was unable to confirm for me that not a single penny of SDTC funding had been allocated to companies since the start of the year, despite her \$1,500-a-day salary, I would remind the House. There is more. Since the government cannot break its contracts with these ineligible companies, it has to keep funding them. That is highly problematic. Ineligible companies will keep getting funding.

Here is another example. Consider SDTC's more recently created ecosystem fund. It was a secret fund that was never announced or mentioned even on the website. Certain apps can trace websites over time and reveal what they looked like before. We took a look.

● (1345)

It was not a publicly available fund. I assume that only businesses contacted by certain members could receive funding. One example is ALUS, which received \$5 million. As we know, and as various witnesses said several times, that company was not eligible, mainly because of problems related to financial standards, but also, as we heard, because it did not fund or support the development or demonstration of new technologies. Nevertheless, that company received \$5 million from a secret fund.

*Privilege*

This company had something special, and her name is Aldyen Donnelly. According to the former CEO, Ms. Lawrence, whom I mentioned earlier, she is a very good friend and they have known each other for 20 years. Yes, that is what she said when she appeared before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. Ms. Donnelly stood to make quite a tidy sum as a subcontractor for ALUS. Now she works for that company, which received \$5 million in public money even though it did not meet any of the criteria. That is great.

If money is still owed, these companies will continue to receive public funds. I am repeating that because it is really very problematic for me. ALUS may be one of them. If that company is still owed money, it will be impossible to get the money back or break the contract, because the company itself did not commit fraud. If the company is still owed money, the fund must pay it, or the government will be sued.

What firm helped SDTC write its contracts? Osler, apparently. Yes, that was the very same firm that advised Ms. Verschuren on conflict of interest issues and told her that she did not need to recuse herself from decisions. It was the very same firm that told SDTC it could approve projects by the dozen, without having the board review each one, during COVID-19. Yesterday, the board member confirmed that Osler is still advising SDTC. There is no clear break. There is no good faith there.

Here is another example. Osler advises a fund called Active Impact. This fund, advised by Osler, has a portfolio that somewhat resembles that of SDTC. Osler advises SDTC on the eligibility of projects, on how to approve projects, yet Osler also advises a fund that will invest in the same companies that SDTC invests in.

All the examples I am providing cannot be set out in an Auditor General's study, because they go beyond the scope of what the Auditor General can audit. On the other hand, they are exactly what this Parliament needs to address. I have plenty of examples like that.

Tomorrow, we will be hearing from the former industry minister. We have a lot of questions for him, and I would rather save them for tomorrow. That said, there are still many things about SDTC that are dubious. Each stone we turn over reveals a new element that interests us and that should interest the entire House and the Quebeckers and Canadians who are listening to us.

I gave many examples, including the case of the current director who refused to answer questions and repeated the same talking points even after the committee chair asked her several times to answer parliamentarians' questions.

Finally, we have to wonder who is doing the obstructing. Is the opposition obstructing Parliament with this privilege motion? Is it not really the government that is obstructing Parliament by refusing to answer parliamentarians' questions? Even people appointed by the government are refusing to answer questions in committee. Furthermore, in the House, the government is refusing to answer questions and accusing the opposition of being short-sighted and trying to obstruct Parliament. The Conservatives may have a slight inclination in that direction, but I can assure my colleagues that we do not. I do not think it is necessarily the case for the NDP either.

• (1350)

What we want is answers. With all the information I just mentioned, some of which was sent to me by the whistle-blower, we need to get to the bottom of things. Yes, it was the whistle-blower at SDTC, someone not yet protected by our legal system, who shared that information with me, all of which was validated by my team. We have to look into this, and there must be consequences.

As I said, there is no point in asking the Auditor General of Canada to look at these issues again, because it exceeds her authority under the Auditor General Act, which determines the scope of the files she can look at and where she can go to audit. She cannot necessarily go and check the financial standards of the companies that have received funding. In this case, she simply looked at a sample of an SDTC project over a number of years. However, what the Office of the Auditor General found was serious enough for the fund to be abolished. Again, the fund had existed for 23 years. It was a success. It would appear that the Liberals have something to hide, and this may be one of the reasons why they refuse to hand over all the requested documents.

It is also important to point out that one of the reasons the Bloc Québécois supports this question of privilege is that we recognize that this fund was useful and that the funding granted by SDTC was useful in most cases. Most of the small and medium-sized businesses that received funding had nothing to do with the examples that I gave of conflict of interest or ineligibility. They had nothing to do with that. On the contrary, they need that money to operate. The federal government finally had a useful fund that was financing a number of projects. In my riding and in the ridings of some of my colleagues, there are some wonderful companies with great ideas and new clean technologies that we will need if we are to make a green transition. However, the Liberal Party has just shown us what it does best, and that is taking good ideas and ruining them. That is what it did with SDTC. It ruined a great fund.

Here is another example of a question the board member was unable to answer yesterday. What will happen to the funds that SDTC has not used? Several hundreds of millions of dollars have not yet been allocated to companies. That money is in SDTC's coffers and will be transferred to the National Research Council of Canada, then to a Crown corporation that will distribute the funding. Neither the Privy Council nor the board member who was appointed four months ago were able to tell me whether these funds will be used to meet the same objectives, namely sustainable development objectives. No one is able to answer me, neither the Privy Council nor the current SDTC board of directors.

No one can say whether the funding that was allocated for clean, green technologies will be knowingly used for such purposes. We do not know, so we are still in the dark. What a great transition, eh? We do not have any answers to questions, we are not being given the documents, and no one can answer such simple and well-meaning questions as this: “What will that money be used for from now on?” Actually, we do know what it will be used for. If the Conservatives take power, then it is possible that the money will not be used for clean technologies but may instead be used to buy more pipelines or to subsidize western oil. That is why the Conservatives and the Liberal government agree on one thing, that it was a good idea to abolish the fund, even if it is for different reasons. For some, it was to get rid of evidence, while for others, it was to get rid of a green fund. It is that simple.

Despite all this information coming to light by the day, I would still like to mention one thing. We do not dispute the independence of the Auditor General of Canada, and I think that the original motion was flawed in that regard. It is not up to us, in Parliament, to hold the Auditor General of Canada to account. However, and this is why I am rising in the House today, it is of the utmost importance that, when we ask the government for documents, it provide them to us in a timely manner and unredacted. Not only is this consistent with our parliamentary standards and responsibilities, it is also the government's duty to provide us with such documents. The truth is sorely needed in this matter. I will therefore address my comments here through the Chair to the government.

• (1355)

If it is going to lose the next election, then let it lose with its head held high. The government should end on a good note by getting to the bottom of the SDTC affair. We need this, and a lot of questions have been raised. Let it finish with its head held high.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is really important that people following the debate realize the government has provided documents. The issue is that they have been redacted, as every government before us and every provincial government has done. When governments provide documents, at times we will see redactions.

The independent RCMP and the independent Auditor General have expressed serious concerns with the Conservatives' tactic, which could be in violation of the Charter of Rights. It is right for the government to be concerned.

Does the member not believe we should be concerned with what the RCMP and the Auditor General are saying with regard to the—

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I know we are getting close to question period, but I want to remind members that we are still in debate. If they have anything to contribute to the debate, they should wait until the appropriate time. We have 10 minutes for questions and comments, which will continue after question period as well.

I want to remind members to be respectful. If they do not have the floor, they should not be speaking.

### Statements by Members

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I invite my colleague to listen to my speech again because he clearly missed the part where I mentioned that the independence of the Auditor General and the RCMP was not in question.

The government has a duty to provide us the documents that are being requested. It is Parliament's duty to hold the government to account. These documents must not be redacted as this is a request of this Parliament.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. That was a good speech.

The member gave several examples of how the federal government has wasted taxpayers' money. This comes as no surprise, but now we do not have enough funding for small green businesses. Does this come as a surprise to her?

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understood the question.

If my colleague is asking me whether it is a surprise that there is a lack of funding for green businesses, then it definitely is. Since 2016, this government has been bragging about being a green government that will provide funding for new technologies. However, let us look at what the government did with the Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, fund. It was in place since 2001 and, now, because of this government, it has been abolished.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

**Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the passage of Bill C-49 sends a powerful message to all Atlantic Canadians that the future of Canada is green.

I was shocked when the Conservative leader directed his party to oppose Bill C-49 and the amendments to the Atlantic accords. In doing so, Conservatives were positioned to rob Atlantic Canada's economy of investments of millions upon millions of dollars. They stood in the way of provincial governments, municipal governments, local businesses, first nations communities, unions and numerous environmental groups, all of whom lobbied and rallied for the legislation as the key to unlocking our green future.

Conservative politics and Conservatives' climate change denial almost ended the green energy sector before it even began. Nova Scotia has won. Bill C-49 is now law, and we are one step closer to being a world energy leader in green energy production.

*Statements by Members*

● (1400)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would remind members that we are in Statements by Members. If individuals are not interested, I would ask them to step outside to have their conversations.

[Translation]

I hope that is understood.

The hon. member for Oxford.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADIAN FARMERS**

**Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as Thanksgiving approaches, we have so much to be grateful for in Oxford, especially our incredible farmers who are working hard on the fall harvest.

Oxford farmers are some of the toughest and best farmers in Canada. They are the backbone of our community, rising early and working late hours to ensure food makes its way from their fields to our forks. As the proud dairy capital of Canada, Oxford leads the way with thriving agri-tourism, food production and cheese industries that fuel our tables and our economy. As farmers face higher input costs and more red tape from the Liberal government, Conservatives will be partners with farmers so we can grow more, produce more and harvest more right here in Canada.

This Thanksgiving, let us thank these men and women who risk and sacrifice so much to feed our families and, above all, let us thank God for the farmer.

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**OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR**

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our government is working to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the clean economy, especially in Nova Scotia. That is why we passed Bill C-49, which will enable the creation of offshore wind projects in Atlantic Canada for the very first time. This bill alone will attract billions in investments and create thousands of jobs for Atlantic Canadians.

That is why I was so deeply disturbed to see the Conservative Party turn its back on Nova Scotians once again by opposing this legislation in an attempt to stop these jobs, stop economic growth and stop renewable energy projects from coming home to Nova Scotia. Fortunately, the Conservatives failed, and we delivered.

[Translation]

This bill adds to our many investments in the clean economy, our technology tax credits and so on. Through these efforts, we will grow Canada's economy and fight climate change at the same time.

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**35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CORPORATION DE DÉVELOPPEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE DE BEAUPORT**

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Corpo-

ration de développement communautaire de Beauport, also known as the Beauport CDC.

The Beauport CDC enables dozens of its member community organizations to work together on improving the quality of life for Beauport residents, especially the most vulnerable, by pooling their knowledge, dedication and commitment. Whether through anti-poverty projects, support for families or mental health initiatives, the Beauport CDC is a pillar of our community. Jacques Bellemare, executive director of the Beauport CDC, deserves our utmost admiration. Determined, courageous, a consummate diplomat with a keen sense of humour, he is the organization's unsurpassed maestro.

I would like to thank volunteers and staff members, both past and present, for taking concrete action to fight poverty, support families and boost mental health. I thank them for being with us and for us, day after day.

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[English]

**OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR**

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when I sat in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature with former premier Danny Williams, he had to go to Ottawa to fight day in and day out against the Conservative Harper government as it tried to rip up the Atlantic accord, a historic agreement that has delivered jobs and prosperity in the province for generations.

Over the last year in the House of Commons, I have had to fight day in and day out with my Liberal colleagues against the Conservatives again, who tried to rip up the Atlantic accord and kill Bill C-49. For the last year, the Conservatives have stood against the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Nova Scotia, while we fought for them so we could deliver on the promise of the Atlantic accord and the enormous economic opportunities of Bill C-49.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have led the offshore oil sector. We will lead the offshore green energy sector, and we will do it without the support of the Conservative Party.

● (1405)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, there were individuals who were not being very respectful during that statement. Some of them are recidivists. I would ask them to please afford the respect. We have students here in the House who are watching and listening to what is going on here, and I would just ask members to be a good example to them.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

*Statements by Members***WILDFIRE RESPONSE IN JASPER**

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there is mounting evidence that the environment minister was grossly negligent in his handling of the catastrophic Jasper wildfire, a fire that cost \$1 billion, destroyed a third of Jasper and left 40% of town residents homeless. The minister was repeatedly warned that Jasper was a tinderbox, yet, in the face of that, his officials cancelled prescribed burns out of concern for political optics. This is scandalous. When the fire began, the minister obstructed the ability of the Alberta government to participate in the response. Proper infrastructure was not in place, and more than 50 firefighters were turned away as Jasper burned. There was failure after failure under the minister's watch; he has a lot to answer for.

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**OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR**

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians are smart, passionate, hard-working people. Nova Scotians are seizing our strong winds, turning them into big revenue that will drive our economy and produce good jobs for generations to come. Unlike the Conservatives, we believe that Nova Scotians should reap the rewards of the multi-trillion dollar offshore wind and clean hydrogen industries. That is why the passage of Bill C-49 represents a huge step for Nova Scotians and Atlantic Canadians, unlocking a generational economic opportunity for our region. However, just like the Harper Conservatives of the past, who tried to push Atlantic Canada down by taking our offshore revenues, Conservatives are again doing everything they can to block this huge opportunity for Atlantic Canadians.

We will not let them. We are standing up for Nova Scotians and Atlantic Canadians because our hard-working people deserve to prosper.

\* \* \*

**WIND ENERGY**

**Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the offshore wind industry is expected to attract \$1 trillion in investment by 2040. With the passing of Bill C-49, Newfoundland and Labrador is poised to lead the way, just as it did for our oil and gas sector. The Atlantic Accord will now ensure that we are the beneficiaries of our wind resources. That means thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investment. While Conservatives voted against Bill C-49 every step of the way, we believe in the future of wind.

We understand that the energy market is diversifying. We support a strong and prosperous economy for Newfoundland and Labrador. I will always stand up for Newfoundland and Labrador's future. With Bill C-49, it is looking even brighter.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Unfortunately, what should be a time of joy, family and celebration has become a stark reminder of the economic pain the government has caused. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are struggling to afford essentials.

That includes food. In fact, two million Canadians are visiting a food bank in a single month. The food banks across northwestern Ontario are running out of supplies because demand is so high, and Canadians are paying \$700 more for groceries this year than they did in 2023. We know that the NDP-Liberal coalition will, in fact, quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre if they are given the opportunity.

As Canadian families gather for the Thanksgiving weekend, they should know that only common-sense Conservatives have a plan to axe the carbon tax, bring down the cost of food and ensure that all Canadians across this country can afford to feed, heat and house themselves once again.

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**OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR**

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous news for the people of Cape Breton. Bill C-49, our offshore wind bill, is now law. Expanding on the historic Atlantic accords, we have delivered groundbreaking legislation that will enable the construction of offshore renewable energy in Atlantic Canada. While support for the legislation was unanimous in the Nova Scotia provincial legislation, shamefully, the federal Conservative leader directed his party to oppose countless jobs and billions of dollars' worth in investments for sustainable growth.

Bill C-49 sought input from indigenous stakeholders, local businesses, the fisheries and environmental advocacy groups to improve and pass this important legislation. It is a shame that no Atlantic Conservative member was brave enough to stand up to their leader, but, on this side of the House, we will continue to fight for our environment, build the economies of the future and advocate for Atlantic jobs.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have more proof that the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. The Speaker has ruled that the NDP-Liberal government violated a House order to turn over evidence for a criminal investigation into its latest \$400-million scandal, effectively obstructing justice.

*Statements by Members*

The refusal to respect the ruling has paralyzed the House, sidelining our efforts to address skyrocketing housing costs, food inflation and rampant crime. This is the latest in a litany of financial scandals with the government. The Auditor General's investigation revealed that the Liberal appointees at SDTC funnelled nearly 400 million taxpayer dollars into their own companies, with over 186 conflicts of interest, while Canadians struggled to afford basic necessities.

Will the NDP-Liberal government end this cover-up, hand over the evidence to the police and let Parliament get back to work for Canadians?

\* \* \*

**BRIANNA MCDONALD**

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Brianna McDonald, a vibrant, intelligent 13-year-old girl, was abandoned by a system that should have provided mental health care and addiction care, the care she so desperately needed to help her overcome her demons. The system failed Brianna.

On August 23, Brianna was found unresponsive. She died by overdose, alone in a tent in a homeless encampment in Abbotsford, B.C. Instead of being provided with the care she needed, she was given needles and taught how to use them. Brianna had just turned 13. Did the Prime Minister call? No. Did the Minister of Health or Minister of Mental Health call? No.

Brianna's parents are in Ottawa today. What does the Prime Minister have to say to them now? Because of his failed radical drug policies, they will never see their daughter again.

\* \* \*

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hydrogen industry in Canada is expected to be worth \$12 trillion by 2050. It helped create more than 350,000 Canadian jobs, all the while helping us fight climate change. Together with the provinces, Canada's allies, industry and organizations such as the Canadian Hydrogen Association, Canada will succeed from this enormous economic opportunity.

Canada is making strides with the national hydrogen strategy, hydrogen investment tax credits and Bill C-49, the Atlantic accords amendments act. By leveraging our world-class offshore wind resources, we are positioning ourselves as a leading clean energy supplier while boosting our economy and creating thousands of jobs.

This summer, I witnessed a game-changer at Canada's first operational fuel station for class 8 hydrogen trucks. I thank ITD Industries, Walmart Canada and Nikola. They are transforming the trucking industry with lower maintenance and fuel costs, an impressive range of over 800 kilometres and, best of all, zero emissions.

Let us all embrace the hydrogen opportunity. It is a win for both Canada's economy and our environment.

**BIRD POPULATIONS**

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third report on "The State of Canada's Birds" was released today by Birds Canada and Environment Canada.

Birds are literally the canaries in the coal mine for our environmental health, and previous reports from 2012 and 2019 raised some serious red flags. Today's report shows that some of those concerns are getting worse. For instance, grassland birds have declined by two-thirds since 1970, so something is clearly going wrong in our grasslands.

However, these reports also show that, when we know what is going wrong and have the political will to fix it, we can see dramatically positive results. Hawks, eagles and falcons have increased by a third since 1970 because we banned DDT. Waterfowl have also increased because we started conserving their habitats.

We know all this about bird populations because of the thousands of talented volunteers who go out every day to count birds. These citizen scientists have given us an incredibly powerful measure of the health of our forests, grasslands and waters.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

**HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS NIGHT**

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, October 18 is homelessness awareness night, when we will once again gather to shine a light on a reality that is affecting far too many people.

This year's theme, the 100 faces of homelessness, draws attention to the fact that behind the often misunderstood word "homeless" are people with diverse backgrounds and stories, in other words, human beings. Homelessness does not have just one face. A young man who ran away from an unstable home, an isolated senior who has been forgotten by society, a worker in a precarious financial situation who is unable to make ends meet or an individual who is suffering from mental health problems or addiction can all be homeless. No matter how they may appear to us, they are all human beings with hopes and dreams and a desire to find meaning in their life.

Homelessness awareness night is more than just an event. It is a reminder of our collective responsibility, because behind every face there is a person with a story, who deserves to be heard, respected and supported.

[English]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear. Samidoun, also known as the Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, is knowingly acting on behalf of, at the direction of or in association with at least one terrorist entity listed under the Criminal Code: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Samidoun is based in Canada and incorporated as a not-for-profit under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. Other jurisdictions have taken action. Germany and Israel have listed Samidoun as a terrorist entity, and the European Union has banned this group from entry. The Liberal government needs to take terrorism and anti-Semitism seriously; it needs to take the evidence seriously and list Samidoun as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code of Canada.

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### LEADERS OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the members of the Northwest Territories Council of Leaders to Ottawa this week. This collaboration of both the territorial and indigenous governments is a forum for co-operation and collaboration on shared priorities.

While these leaders represent different levels of government and different regions, they are coming together for the same reason: to build a better future for northern communities. This council is meeting with federal ministers and officials in Ottawa to highlight and advocate for the interests of those from NWT. These include advancing reconciliation and modern treaties, protecting our environment while sustainably developing our economy and building necessary infrastructure, such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

I welcome the council leaders, and I look forward to the continued progress in advancing northern priorities.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a \$400-million Liberal scandal has paralyzed Parliament for a week. The Speaker himself ruled that the NDP-Liberals have violated a House order to turn over evidence to the police for a criminal investigation into their corruption. They are defying his ruling and they have ground this place to a halt. The auditor said that there are 400 million tax dollars and 186 conflicts of interest in question. Canadians could get accountability today if they would hand over the documents to the police.

What is in those documents and how bad is it?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by noting the events in Vancouver yesterday at a protest. We unequivocally condemn those events and those actions. It is absolutely unacceptable to burn

### Oral Questions

the Canadian flag and to chant “death to Canada”. It is also unacceptable to deny and celebrate the events of October 7 and to champion the acts of a terrorist group.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that they finally found the courage to condemn something in the House, but, getting back to the matter at hand that I asked about, whatever is in those documents must be really bad if they are willing to hide the corruption. Months ago, the Auditor General found that the Liberal appointees gave nearly 400 million tax dollars to their own companies and that there were 186 conflicts of interest.

I will ask this again for the seventh day in a row: Will the NDP-Liberals end the cover-up and give proof to the police so that we can get accountability for the corruption and get Parliament back to work?

● (1420)

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that I read the Speaker's ruling into the record because the Conservatives did not hear it the first time:

...the Chair is of the view that it would be valuable to afford an opportunity for the concerns expressed by the RCMP, as well as by the Auditor General, to be addressed fully and, I would hope, for a mutually satisfactory solution to be arrived at.

I believe the best way for this to be achieved would be to follow the usual course for a prima facie question of privilege, that is, a referral to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

We are ready to send this matter to a committee. When will the Conservatives do that?

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the House leader missed the part where the Speaker told them that they were holding the House in contempt. If there is nothing to hide in those documents, then they should be able to hand them over.

There was \$400 million given to Liberal friends and 186 conflicts of interest, from a government that knows really well what a conflict of interest is, all while a record number of Canadians cannot afford to eat.

How bad are these documents that the government would hold this place up for seven days, defying the Speaker's order, to hide the \$400 million it gave to its friends?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are ready for this matter to move on to the procedure and House affairs committee, just as the Speaker ruled. The only party that does not want that to happen is the Conservative Party. They are trying to spin out their own obstruction because they do not want this to go to committee.

*Oral Questions*

What they will hear is expert after expert talking about the egregious abuse of power the Conservatives are trying to do in this place, to override the rights of Canadians. We are ready to move forward. It is only the Conservatives who are afraid of a vote.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in La Presse this morning, Sergeant Vincent Moore of the Montreal police Éclipse squad was condemning the fact that gang members use firearms without fear of consequences. He said, “Everything's gone completely crazy. I've never seen anything like it in my 18-year career...These days, it's not uncommon for someone to be arrested and then say, ‘No big deal, you're going to give me a piece of paper and let me go, and I'm going to do it again.’ They're no longer afraid of being arrested by the police. They know there won't be any consequences.”

Why are the Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois letting criminals call the shots in our communities?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for asking this question. It gives me the opportunity to highlight what we have done. As far as firearms are concerned, we have invested about \$400 million to fight guns and gangs. The Conservatives and the member opposite voted against these measures.

In terms of the administration of justice, yes, there is a problem with the bail system. When we look at the bail system, we have to check whether enough Crown prosecutors are challenging bail applications and whether enough space is available in detention centres. That would be a good question to ask Premier Legault.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is twice now that the Minister of Justice of Canada has blamed the Legault government for the administration of justice, which this government changed.

The Criminal Code is a federal responsibility. That is why Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 have caused so many problems on the streets of Montreal and now everywhere else in Quebec. Sergeant Giguère of the Éclipse squad in Montreal even reportedly said that prior to this decision, people on the street would tell police they did not want to be locked up for long, but now, people are being arrested for using firearms and they are out again soon after. Is that normal?

Why does the government refuse to amend the laws that have destroyed Canada's entire justice system?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the legislation my colleague just mentioned, the act resulting from Bill C-75, increased penalties for auto theft. He voted against it.

Second, the people who grant bail are the judges appointed by Mr. Legault, so if there is a question or a problem with the administration of justice, the member should talk to Mr. Legault about the number of lawyers, court backlogs, space in detention centres and the fact that there may be some problems with the decisions being made.

• (1425)

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, enough with dragging things out at the expense of our farmers.

Every party voted in favour of Bill C-282 on June 21, 2023. It was sent to the Senate over a year ago. The bill has one clause. The Senate has been studying one clause for over a year. How can that be? It is because two senators who are not elected by the people, Peter Boehm and Peter Harder, disagree, so they are dragging their feet. Two unelected senators want to undo the vote of elected members from all parties. They were appointed by the Liberals.

Who in the Liberal Party is going to explain to the cronies in the Senate how democracy works?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we completely agree with the Bloc Québécois on this.

Supply management is very important in our country. It is especially important for our land use. We want to be there to support and protect the system and help our farmers.

Yes, we expect the Senate to work diligently on this issue and to ensure our bill comes back as soon as possible.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, all parties voted in favour of Bill C-282.

This is the second time we have introduced this bill, which all parties voted for. It has been analyzed six ways from Sunday since 2020. It has one single clause. Not even the Bible has been analyzed that thoroughly.

Two senators, who must think we are a bunch of chumps, say they want to overrule how 338 elected representatives voted. Unacceptable.

Will the Liberals ask their two friends to stop thwarting democracy?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government made a big decision together with our leader. We made the Senate independent.

Since coming to power nine years ago, we have appointed senators who are independent. I feel the Bloc Québécois should understand that concept.

\* \* \*

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, finding affordable housing is harder than ever for people across the country.



*Oral Questions*

We have just learned that big property owners may be using artificial intelligence software to secretly collude and hike rents. The NDP moved a motion to get to the bottom of this, but the Liberals and the Conservatives blocked it. That is shameful. Canadians cannot find affordable housing.

Why are the Liberals and Conservatives protecting big landlords' profits instead of protecting people?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague well knows, making investments is essential. It is not enough to just identify problems.

On this side of the House, investing in the construction of affordable housing is important. It is vital for supporting communities that also build housing.

[English]

The government is going to continue to make investments to actually get homes built, not simply point fingers and try to identify problems with no solutions coming forward.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the housing minister needs to tell his members to stop blocking the presence of these CEOs in committee. For Canadians who rent, finding a home they can afford is nearly impossible, and these rich corporate landlords are using artificial intelligence software to potentially collude and jack up rents. The NDP proposed a study to expose rent gouging, but the Liberals and Conservatives teamed up and blocked it.

**Some hon. members:** Shame.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a government that protects them, so why are the Liberals, along with the Conservatives, continuing to protect the profits of corporate landlords over renters struggling to find a home?

**The Speaker:** Once again, I am going to encourage all members not to take the floor unless they are recognized, and that includes the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my NDP colleague has suggested it is for the minister to tell my colleagues what to do at committee.

On this side of the House, I can tell the members that it is my colleagues who tell me to increase investments to build more affordable housing. The NDP members have made a point of pointing out where there may be some challenges, which I actually agree that we need to address. The difference on our side of the House is we are advancing solutions to address them. We are putting billions of dollars on the table to build more affordable housing, to build more co-operative housing and to help non-profits buy up that low-cost housing on the market to keep it affordable forever.

If the New Democrats want to turn their minds to solutions, I will listen. Until then, I am going to continue acting.

• (1430)

**INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is violating a parliamentary order to hand over evidence to the RCMP.

At issue is the Auditor General's finding that officials at SDTC broke conflict of interest laws 186 times and funnelled \$400 million of taxpayers' money into their own companies, all this at a time when Canadians can barely afford to eat or heat and house themselves.

Now, by refusing to accept the Speaker's ruling, the Liberals have effectively paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside all other work to address the housing crisis, the inflation crisis and the crime crisis the government unleashed.

Why not end the cover-up, hold the lawbreakers to account and let Parliament get back to work?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** False, Mr. Speaker. That member sat in your chair at one point, and I think he would have an interesting perspective if the opposition was not following his ruling as he is doing.

I quote, and I repeat what you said, Mr. Speaker:

I believe the best way for this to be achieved would be to follow the usual course for a prima facie question of privilege, that is, a referral to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The government is willing to do that. We are willing to vote in favour of it. The only party that is holding Parliament up are the Conservatives, because they do not want the truth out there.

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

**The Speaker:** I am going to ask the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets, please, not to take the floor unless recognized.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the government House leader scrolled up just a little more in your ruling on the website, she would see where you ruled that withholding evidence after a parliamentary production order is a contempt of Parliament.

We are talking about Liberal insiders funnelling cash into their own pockets. Why do they not want to get to the bottom of this?

While Conservatives are putting forward real solutions to lower taxes, make housing more affordable and end the crime wave that the Prime Minister unleashed, the government is going to great lengths to keep this information hidden. It is effectively obstructing justice.

Why not let Parliament get back to work and hand over the evidence to the RCMP?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure the opposition House leader believes his own spin. He could scroll down a little and see what you, Mr. Speaker, asked of him, which was to prepare a motion that you said you would accept to send it to committee to be studied.

We welcome that. We will get this studied. Let us get this out of the House. There is only one group of MPs that does not want that to happen, because what will come out is that the Conservatives are trying to abuse the extraordinary powers of this place, override the rights of Canadians and get rid of police independence.

That is not acceptable.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a case of \$400 million and 186 conflicts of interest that are benefiting Liberal insiders, lining their pockets while Canadians are lined up at food banks. The response from the government to a parliamentary order to produce the documents is, first of all, to break the order so that it can bury it at committee.

Conservatives want to make sure that this corruption, this scandal sees the full daylight that is deserved and a referral to Canada's Royal Canadian Mounted Police, so it can decide to take a criminal investigation—oh wait, we have learned that that is already investigating the latest corruption with these Liberals.

Will the government turn over the documents today?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, your ruling was very clear: send this to committee.

There is only one group of MPs that is afraid of that going to committee. We are prepared to vote on that. Let us send it to committee. Let us have that debate. The only group of MPs that is obstructing its own obstruction, the Conservatives, do not actually want to help Canadians. All they want to do is serve themselves and their own partisan interest.

Let us get this out of the House. Let us get it to committee, so that we can get back to the important work of serving Canadians.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, she says she wants to get it out of the House. She wants to get it out of the sunlight, the daylight. The Liberals want to bury it at committee. They do not want Canadians to know about the latest example of Liberal corruption. We see that conflicts of interest are very common over there. That Prime Minister broke the law twice. The Public Safety Minister broke the law. The trade minister broke the law. The Liberal-appointed chair of this green slush fund broke the law.

Every time these Liberals get a chance, they enrich their friends. They want to hide it from Canadians. Conservatives want to get the truth. We want to get accountability, and we want Parliament to be able to get back to work for Canadians. Will they turn over the documents today?

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

• (1435)

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Minister of Innovation.

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we already have the Bloc, but now we learn we have the blocker-in-chief, the Conservatives. How ridiculous for Canadians watching at home. The Conservatives are blocking their own motion, if we can imagine that.

We know that the Conservatives know how to count to six, so let me explain to them. There has not been one report, there have not been two reports, there have not been three reports, but there have been four independent reports to get to the bottom of this.

We got to the bottom of this. Let us get back to work and expect better from all of us.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, according to a senior official, there is a lot of negligence and laziness. There is also sheer incompetence, and the situation is simply untenable.

The lapses at Sustainable Development Technology Canada are on par with the sponsorship scandal when it comes to allocating funds. Canadians' tax dollars are being squandered without any consideration, and nothing is being done on the other side of the House to address the situation.

Will the Liberal government deal with this scandal as quickly as possible?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are waking up, as though this were news.

We took action quickly and decisively. There have been not one, but four reports: two by national law firms, one by an accounting firm and one by the Auditor General.

We have investigated and we have taken action. It is time for Parliament to get back to work in the interest of all Canadians.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the green slush fund scandal, the government is openly refusing to provide the RCMP with the documents it needs to investigate the corruption at SDTC, where, as the Auditor General pointed out, the Liberals allowed their friends to benefit from taxpayers' money.

Will the Liberals stop hiding things and provide the evidence to the police so that Parliament can work in the interest of all Canadians?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. My colleague, the government House leader, has already clearly explained the situation.

However, since the member is talking about the RCMP, I am going to read an important comment made by the RCMP commissioner, who said, and I quote:

I would like to emphasize...that the RCMP is operationally independent and strictly adheres to the principle of police independence. In a free and democratic society, this ensures that the government cannot direct or influence the actions of law enforcement.

That includes members of the House.

\* \* \*

### SENIORS

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, across all age groups, 79% of the population is in favour of increasing OAS, regardless of age.

No need to be between the ages of 65 and 74, everyone agrees. Why is that? It is because people respect seniors and stand with them. If we can improve the living conditions of those who need it, people are all for it. Even in the House, everyone agrees except for the Liberals.

When are they going to listen to reason, show they have a heart and give royal recommendation to Bill C-319?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Qu b cois has never taken a single opportunity to support our seniors.

They said no to the guaranteed income supplement. They said no to dental care, which today benefits 14,000 people in Shefford. They said no to housing measures for seniors.

When will the Bloc Qu b cois say yes to seniors?

• (1440)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since he was appointed Minister of Seniors, the member for Gatineau's only accomplishment has been to turn his back on people aged 65 to 74.

All he does is play petty politics when he should be thinking big. He promotes Liberal interests when he should be thinking of the collective interest. He is an old-style politician, devoid of statesmanship. It is not too late. He can still take action for the common good.

Will the minister finally come to his senses, set partisanship aside and grant a royal recommendation?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to seniors, I would take the track record of the 35 Liberal members from Quebec over the doings of the Bloc Qu b cois any day.

The Bloc members voted against dental care. They voted against the guaranteed income supplement. They voted against investments in housing for seniors.

Every time we have made a proposal for Quebec seniors, Bloc members rose in unison to say no. The 35 Liberal members from Quebec always say yes to seniors.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on top of that, the minister is using conspiracy theories to justify the fact

### Oral Questions

that he has no intention of doing anything at all for seniors. He tells them that the big bad separatists have a secret plan to take away their pensions.

These are the same old scare tactics from the 1980s.

He talks about winning conditions and independence, but so do we. We believe that improving seniors' living conditions is a good thing and helps ensure their independence.

Instead of fearmongering, will the minister work for people and give a royal recommendation to Bill C-319?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House what seniors are afraid of. They are afraid of having dental care taken away from millions of Canadians. These seniors, certainly seniors in Gatineau, are wondering what the Bloc Qu b cois is doing with the Conservative Party in favour of austerity, cuts to child care spaces, cuts to dental care and cuts to health insurance.

Together with the Conservatives, the Bloc Qu b cois is putting our seniors and Canadians at risk.

\* \* \*

[English]

### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is so much Liberal corruption that they are covering up their cover-up of the \$400 million corruption of the Liberal green slush fund. The Speaker ruled that the NDP-Liberals violated a House order to turn the green slush fund documents over to the RCMP for investigation. How much worse is the corruption that the NDP-Liberals are refusing to respect the order of the Speaker, pushing aside all the work of doubling the housing costs that the Liberals have done, inflation and crime? We can get back to the business of the House if the NDP-Liberals just end the cover-up and turn the documents over to the RCMP.

Why will they not?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we are going to be mansplained to, they can at least try to get it right. The fact of the matter is you ruled very clearly that this matter should go to the House committee. If the members opposite would like to read the full ruling, they can go do that, or I can table it in the House for them to read. I would encourage them to not just cherry-pick parts of the ruling, but to actually follow it, as opposed to what they are doing. We are happy for this matter to move on, for it to go to committee, for it to be studied. It is only the Conservatives that are holding this place up.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every time I meet with a Liberal, I have to check for my wallet. They just took \$400 million of taxpayer money and funnelled it to Liberals in the green slush fund. Why are they ignoring an order of the House? Why are they preventing us from getting to the business of the House, since they will not turn over the documents to the RCMP?

If the Prime Minister will not end the cover-up, will he at least call a carbon tax election so Canadians can get the green slush fund money back?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every time I meet a Conservative, I have to search for some semblance of reason. When we talk about what is going on here, let us think about why your ruling said to send it back to the committees. Your ruling said that because this has never been done. What happens normally when we ask for documents in law enforcement? We go to a court of law. We do not go into a partisan arena, such as the House of Commons, because a court of law, a judge, weighs things called charter interests, like the expectation of privacy, like the right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure. Those are important considerations. We will stand by them every time.

• (1445)

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the latest \$400-million scandal of the Liberal government has paralyzed Parliament. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest, with close to \$400 million handed out to corrupt Liberal insiders, all at a time when Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves.

It begs question: How damning is the evidence that the government has grounded Parliament to a halt simply to hide the truth from Canadians?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the interventions from the member opposite, but I also appreciate his experience as a former Crown prosecutor. He used to work closely with the police. What he would recollect from his past career is that the police operate independently, independently from him as a former Crown and certainly independently from politicians. Why do they do that? So we can have confidence in our institutions in the country. Who does not have confidence? People who live under authoritarian regimes.

Instead of emulating authoritarianism, how about the member joins this side and learns how to fight against it?

**The Speaker:** I would ask the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills to please not raise his voice when he is not recognized by the Chair.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, you ruled that the NDP-Liberals violated a House order by withholding evidence regarding their \$400-million scandal, effectively obstructing justice, to which the Minister of Justice should be aware. Their refusal to respect your ruling has paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside all our work to address the doubling of housing costs, food in-

flation and the rise in crime and chaos. The time to end the cover-up is now.

When will the government hand over the documents so that we can get accountability for corruption and get Parliament back to work?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, your ruling was clear to send this matter to committee for further study. The Conservatives do not like that because they will hear from experts like the former law clerk, who says, “[In my humble opinion] it is an abuse of its powers for the House to use its power to demand and get documents from the Government in order to transfer them to a third party...that wouldn't otherwise receive them or to compel the Government to give documents to the third party.” Expert after expert will tell them this is wrong.

We are here to stand up for the rights of Canadians every single day.

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#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the Liberals are actively refusing reconciliation and evading their obligations required in the honour the Crown.

The government knew for seven years that “the big dock” in Fort Chipewyan is contaminated with cancer-causing substances, and for seven years it covered it up. Rightfully, families are now worried about their children's health and whether they will lose them to cancer.

When will the government uphold the honour of the Crown and work with first nations to ensure their health and safety?

**Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this important point. Safety is my top priority as Minister of Transport. I hear and understand the concerns from first nations communities. It is crucial that remote northern and indigenous communities have access to the safe and reliable connectivity that they need.

I will continue to work with the Minister of Indigenous Services on this very important matter.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are now over 1,300 days since the Liberals promised to end long-term boil water advisories, but instead of doing that, they are fighting first nations in court as we speak. Doing their best Stephen Harper impression, they are carrying on years of colonialism and denying first nations the right to clean drinking water.

Shamattawa, the lead plaintiff, is taking on Canada, one of the richest countries in the world, whose Prime Minister travels the world pretending to be a leader in human rights, all the while denying Shamattawa clean water.

*Oral Questions*

When will the government stop fighting Shamattawa, Tatakweyak and 58 first nations and deliver clean drinking water?

• (1450)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have lifted 145 long-term boiled water advisories together with first nations. We are going to continue until we get the job done. As a matter of fact, that member opposite has an opportunity to help make sure we never return to the situation that we found ourselves in 2015.

With Bill C-61 at committee, nearing study, I hope we will see a safe passage of that legislation through the House so that no first nations person ever lives without clean water again.

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**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the 1980s, the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador came together to sign the historic Atlantic accord. This agreement created an offshore energy sector in our province, delivering economic opportunity and prosperity for generations of families and communities.

Now this government and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador have come together again to strengthen this accord and kick-start a new offshore renewable energy industry. Bill C-49 has now become law, ensuring that Newfoundland and Labradorians can lead the world in offshore wind and clean energy.

**Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with a strengthened Atlantic accord, Atlantic Canada is set to become a global leader in wind hydrogen. There are trillions of dollars on the table, and we should all be excited about the good jobs that will create in our region. We can think about the kids who will now get to see their folks work at home.

However, the Conservatives spent months blocking Bill C-49. How could the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame fight against the best interests of his community? Because Conservatives try to stand in the way of progress, but we get it done. Atlantic Canada will produce the clean energy that the world wants.

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**ETHICS**

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Now we are dealing with yet another Liberal corruption scandal.

The Liberal minister from Edmonton misled a parliamentary committee when he claimed to have had no contact with his business partner around the time of an alleged half-a-million dollar fraud, involving someone named Randy. However, when phone records proved otherwise, he changed his story.

Why will he not just come clean about this corruption?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have stated many times, if a witness goes to committee, we expect that they provide the information that the committee asks of them.

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear from that answer that the corruption cover-up continues.

The Liberal minister from Edmonton first said that he did not text with his business partner, but now there is clear evidence that he did. It is no coincidence that after months of looking into this matter, there is no other Randy who can be identified other than the Liberal minister from Edmonton. In fact, the minister's own business partner even admitted that the only other Randy ever connected to the company is that minister.

When will the minister finally stand up in this place and admit that he broke the law?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I stated, if a witness goes to committee and the committee asks them for information, we believe that the witness should provide the information as requested of them, and we expect as much.

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. In order to get around the Conflict of Interest Act, the Liberal minister from Edmonton seems to have hired someone known as the other Randy to manage his fraud-ridden medical supply company. Well, just like the other Randy, there should be another prime minister to run the government.

When will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election so Canadians can finally have another prime minister?

• (1455)

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all of us come to this place because we want to serve Canadians. The Liberals on this side of the House want to be able to deliver important measures for them, but we know that we need to earn their trust every single day. What we see from Conservative members of Parliament is that they think they have already won the next election, but that is not how elections work.

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We all have to have humility in this place to work hard for Canadians. It is up to the Conservatives now to determine whether they want to do that work or whether they do not. Let us get to work. We are ready to do that.

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[Translation]

#### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, you yourself decided that this Liberal government had violated an order of the House that called on the government to hand over evidence to the police as part of the investigation into the latest \$400-million Liberal scandal. Liberal corruption has brought Parliament to an absolute standstill. Canadians are counting on us to do something about the high cost of living, crime and the budget chaos that has been making them poorer for nine years.

When will this Liberal government stop obstructing justice so that we can finally get back to doing the work that will help Canadians put food on the table, put a roof over their heads and live in dignity?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians watching at home have a question. Why are the Conservatives still going on about an organization that has ceased operations?

The CEO has resigned. The board of directors has resigned. The issue before us today is that the Conservatives do not like the order that the Speaker gave to send this matter to committee. Why? Perhaps it is because they may learn some things in committee.

We, on this side of the House, believe in rights. We believe in natural justice. We will always stand up for democracy.

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#### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, these days we are hearing a lot of things about asylum seekers, and not very thoughtful things. It makes people lose sight of what is important. There are too many asylum seekers in Quebec for our capacity to accommodate them. We are incapable of providing services to these people, who are living in misery.

There are some provinces that can help them but are refusing to do so. The only humane way to handle the record influx of asylum seekers is for everyone to do their part. The provinces are not budging. The federal government needs to step in. This falls under federal jurisdiction.

What is the minister doing to get things moving?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. This is a shared responsibility with the federal government. We must do our work in collaboration with the provinces that are on side for welcoming asylum seekers. We are asking all the provinces to do their part. I am prepared to work with the provinces that are willing. We will continue to do that because it is very important to continue to work with compassion, without bashing asylum seekers.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the government does nothing, in Quebec, we no longer have classes available for the children of asylum seekers. We no longer have teachers to assign to the classes we do not have. We are no longer able to supply food banks. We are in the midst of a housing crisis. As we speak, new people are arriving at Montreal's Trudeau airport to claim asylum. They will join the ranks of the victims of this crisis. The provinces are doing nothing. The federal government is doing nothing. The Conservatives are hiding.

What will it take for Canada to do something?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the shortage of teachers in Quebec and across Canada is nothing new. Although the member opposite wants to blame asylum seekers, they are not the reason why there is a shortage of teachers in Quebec.

It is clear that we have more work to do, but it seems to me that the member missed the past six months. If he had read the letter that I sent to the Premier of Quebec and to Jean-François Roberge, he would have seen that progress has been made. There is no denying it.

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[English]

#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The radical environment minister ignored experts who warned Jasper faced a devastating wildfire if nothing was done. His officials discussed cancelling prescribed burns for political optics, and now we have learned 50 firefighters and 20 fire trucks were turned away as a third of Jasper burned. Thousands are homeless and nearly a billion dollars in damage.

Will the Minister of Environment stand up and apologize to the people of Jasper for his failure?

● (1500)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that the discussion between those Parks Canada employees was to determine whether they would do prescribed burns or mechanical removals. He knows that; Conservatives know that. To try to insinuate that because they did not want to do prescribed burns we did nothing is simply false. In fact, we invested 40 times more in forest fighting capacities around Jasper than the Conservatives did when they were in power.

*Oral Questions*

The company he talks about has no relationship with Parks Canada. It is a company that works for the Alberta government. I am happy to give him the number of the premier in Alberta, if he needs it.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The latest revelation is that 50 firefighters and 20 fire trucks were turned away from Jasper National Park just before the town burned. These brave firefighters were ready, willing and able to fight these fires but were ordered to stand down. Now the only question that remains is this: Would the minister categorize the results of his leadership in this as incompetence or as negligence?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has heard from the minister for Parks Canada. The company in question was in the employ of the Government of Alberta and the matter was resolved.

I have been in regular contact with Mayor Ireland and his council, as have other members in this government, other ministers and other MPs. We are working with Mayor Ireland, his council and Jasperites every week to make sure Jasper comes back better than ever before, because that is what Albertans and Canadians expect of us.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, four years ago, Parks Canada put out a tweet that said it would be installing a sprinkler system to protect the Jasper townsite. Even the minister's own officials seem to know that water is better at stopping fires than his carbon tax, and yet there is no indication these sprinklers were ever installed, despite a tender notice being posted in 2021, three years before the devastating fire. Can the minister confirm how many permanent and mobile sprinklers were operational and deployed in Jasper to save homes and businesses? Give us just the number please, even if it rhymes with zero.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, instead of spreading disinformation and misinformation in the House, I actually went to Jasper, and the sprinkler system has been installed by Parks Canada in collaboration with the work we have been doing with the City of Jasper. I would be happy to show him where it is in the city.

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

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, it is so important for members to only speak when they take the floor so we can hear the questions and answers, and I am also referring to the hon. member for Lakeland, please. It is important that we only take the time to speak when we have the microphone, so we can all hear, especially people who require the use of translation. It is being respectful of our colleagues to make sure they can hear the questions and the answers.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

\* \* \*

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Stephen Harper referred to Atlantic Canada as “a culture of defeat”. When the Conservatives were in government—

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

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, the more time that I am spending up on my feet the less time we have for questions. I am going to ask members for quiet, please.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants, from the top, please.

• (1505)

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, Stephen Harper referred to Atlantic Canada as “a culture of defeat”. When the Conservative government amended the Atlantic accords, it put our region's interests in the back seat. Just ask Bill Casey.

As it relates to Bill C-49, our government has worked with the Government of Nova Scotia and with Newfoundland and Labrador because the legislation represents billions of dollars in economic opportunity. The Conservatives stood in the way every single time. Can the Minister of Housing provide an update to this House about why this bill matters for Nova Scotia?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his advocacy for the economy in Nova Scotia. There are a few reasons we got involved in politics; creating good jobs at home and protecting the environment are among them.

The behaviour of Conservative MPs from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador with respect to this file is absolutely ridiculous. We have to ask ourselves why they oppose good jobs at home. I expect it is because it protects the environment, too, and their leader has told them they are not allowed to talk about climate change unless it is to visit school kids and tell them carbon dioxide is just plant food and is nothing to worry about.

This legislation is going to make a meaningful difference, create well-paying jobs on the east coast and protect our environment. I wish Atlantic MPs on the Conservative side would get behind it.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on October 7, while burning the maple leaf, Samidoun terrorist sympathizers openly called for “Death to Canada. Death to the United States. And death to Israel”. After nine years of the Prime Minister, sadly, calls for death to Canada and our allies have now been normalized. Samidoun operates as an arm of a listed terrorist organization in Canada.

Will the Prime Minister protect Jewish Canadians from home-grown extremism and list Samidoun as a terrorist organization?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing the member and I will be able to agree on today, it is that we both condemn what happened yesterday on the streets of Vancouver. That is why we will always condemn any form of anti-Semitism. I am convinced that everybody in this House will condemn any form of anti-Semitism.

**Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in March of this year, Samidoun paraded through my riding to intimidate our Jewish community. Now we see videos of Samidoun members in our streets calling for the death of Canada, shouting “Long live October 7” and calling Hamas terrorists their heroes while they burn the Canadian flag. The government has done nothing to put a stop to these pro-genocide, anti-Semitic, anti-Canadian mobs who threaten our Jewish communities nationwide.

Will the Prime Minister commit to protecting our Jewish communities and label Samidoun a terrorist organization?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the actions that have taken place in our streets are wrong. We condemn them, full stop. Any form of anti-Semitism is wrong. This is precisely why the Minister of Public Safety had already referred the listing of Samidoun to our national security advisers and asked for an urgent emergency review. We have already taken action, but we know this issue is not political, and it is a shame that Conservatives only stand up when they think it suits their political advantage.

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

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, these are very important questions and very important answers. I am going to ask the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton to please not speak out of turn and allow the questions and answers to occur uninterrupted.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the government had taken action, it would have listed them already.

If burning a Canadian flag, calling for the death of Canadians, fomenting hate in this country and, most of all, being a front for an already-listed terrorist organization are not enough to put Samidoun on the list, then what the hell is it going to take for the government to ban it?

• (1510)

**The Speaker:** Very quickly, before we go to the answer, I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the unparliamentary language.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to an issue as serious as this, we are not going to play politics with Canadian safety. When it comes to the listing of terrorist entities, the members opposite know full well it is not a political decision. It is based on the national security services of this country. It is precisely why the minister had already sent it for an urgent review, understanding that this hate is unacceptable in Canada.

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, I have asked all hon. members to please not take the floor. I will ask the hon. member for Thornhill, who had an opportunity to speak and could also speak again, I am sure, to please not speak out of turn while other members have the floor.

The hon. member for Halifax West.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Parliament has passed Bill C-49. It will create an offshore wind energy sector in my region, bringing jobs, investment and clean energy. Despite this, the Conservatives opposed Bill C-49 and opposed renewable energy. They chose their ideology over the people of Canada.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain why we need to seize the economic opportunities of the energy transition?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the energy transition means an additional 400,000 jobs in Canada by 2030. The offshore wind energy sector will be worth \$1 trillion. Hundreds of thousands of clean energy jobs will be created, but these jobs are not guaranteed. To get them, we need an ambitious climate plan. That is why we passed Bill C-49, which will enable us to develop offshore wind energy in Canada. Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois sided with the Conservatives to vote against renewable energy. Our government will fight to seize these economic opportunities and create these jobs even if the other parties turn their backs on the fight against climate change.



*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**LABOUR**

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, new data reveals that one in four Canadians is forced into precarious gig work, and under the Liberals, the cost of living has exploded while wages have fallen behind. More than ever, workers need and deserve more power, protection and pay, and joining a union is the best way to get that. While Liberals continue to undermine unions and Conservatives want to tear them down, New Democrats will always be Canada's only labour party.

Will the government support the NDP's plan for sectoral bargaining so that gig workers can benefit from a union card?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, whether it is sticking up for replacement workers, whether it is doubling the union training investment fund, this is the most labour-friendly government in the history of our country. We are union-proud and union-friendly. We are going to continue to make sure that we grow this economy from the bottom up and the middle out, and that means with good union workers.

\* \* \*

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after a summer of wildfires that destroyed thousands of hectares of forests in the iconic city of Jasper, the Liberals are planning to cut funding for emergency services. To make matters worse, the government has failed to train even a single firefighter in five provinces. It is the government's job to protect communities, but it is letting people down.

We know Conservatives cut services all the time, but why are the Liberals risking Canadians' lives just to help their bottom line?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not true. We have invested significantly in emergency preparedness. In fact, we have trained over 1,000 firefighters, including indigenous firefighters. We increased equipment to the provinces and territories, and we have been working collaboratively to make sure they have all the resources necessary to fight the wildfires that are a devastating result of climate change.

\* \* \*

● (1515)

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Heather Lank, Parliamentary Librarian, who will be retiring at the end of next week.

Dr. Lank first joined the federal public service in 1990 and then moved to the Senate, taking on various leadership roles, before joining the Library of Parliament in 2018 as Parliamentary Librarian.

[Translation]

On behalf of all members, I would like to thank Dr. Lank for her years of service and wish her all the best in the future.

Thank you very much, Dr. Lank.

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

● (1525)

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

*(Division No. 868)*

**YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Ali	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchette-Joneas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier

*Routine Proceedings*

Coteau	Dabrusin	Mendicino	Miao
Dalton	Damoff	Michaud	Miller
Dance	Dancho	Moore	Morantz
Davidson	Davies	Morrice	Morrison
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Morrissey	Motz
Desbiens	Desilets	Murray	Muys
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Naqvi	Nater
Dhillon	Diab	Noormohamed	Normandin
Doherty	Dong	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dowdall	Dreeshen	O'Regan	Patzer
Drouin	Dubourg	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Duclos	Duguid	Perkins	Perron
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)	Dzerowicz	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
El-Khoury	Ellis	Poilievre	Powlowski
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Qualtrough	Rayes
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Redekopp	Reid
Fast	Ferri	Rempel Garner	Richards
Findlay	Fisher	Roberts	Robillard
Fonseca	Fortier	Rodriguez	Rogers
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Romanado	Rood
Fraser	Freeland	Rota	Ruff
Fry	Gaheer	Sahota	Sajjan
Gainey	Gallant	Saks	Samson
Garon	Garrison	Sarai	Sauvé
Gaudreau	Gazan	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Généreux	Genus	Scheer	Schiefke
Gerretsen	Gladu	Schmale	Seeback
Godin	Goodridge	Serré	Sgro
Gould	Gourde	Shanahan	Sheehan
Gray	Green	Shields	Shipley
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Hallan	Hanley	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Hardie	Hepfner	Singh	Small
Hoback	Holland	Sorbara	Soroka
Housefather	Hughes	Sousa	Steinley
Hussen	Hutchings	Ste-Marie	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
Iacono	Idlout	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)	St-Onge
Ien	Jaczek	Strahl	Stubbs
Jeneroux	Jivani	Sudds	Tassi
Johns	Joly	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Jones	Jowhari	Therrien	Thompson
Julian	Kayabaga	Tochor	Tolmie
Kelloway	Kelly	Trudel	Turnbull
Khalid	Khanna	Uppal	Valdez
Khera	Kitchen	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Van Popta	Vandal
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Kurek	Kusie	Vidal	Vien
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Viersen	Vignola
Lake	Lalonde	Villemure	Virani
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Vis	Wagantall
Lantsman	Lapointe	Warkentin	Waugh
Larouche	Lattanzio	Webber	Weiler
Lauzon	Lawrence	Williams	Williamson
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Yip	Zahid
Lehoux	Lemire	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)	Zuberi— 325	
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Nil	
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Majumdar		
Maloney	Martel	Nil	
Martinez Ferrada	Masse		
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)		
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier		
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)		
McGuinty	McKay		
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean		
McLeod	McPherson		
Melillo	Mendès		

NAYS

PAIRED

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

● (1530)

*[English]*

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

*Speaker's Ruling*

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, during question period, a question was asked by the member for Thornhill regarding a terror mob on the streets of Vancouver burning Canadian flags, and the member for Cambridge said, “Shut up” and used a word that starts with a B, which I am not going to say. I am wondering if you can address this, maybe by looking at Hansard, because obviously that is not only offensive but unparliamentary.

**Mr. Bryan May:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you to review the tape. I absolutely did not say that.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for raising the issue. I heard the hon. member for Cambridge. The Chair will take a look at this matter and come back to the House.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

ALLEGED VIOLATION OF STANDING ORDER 116 AT STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised on September 23, 2024, by the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills concerning the alleged violation of Standing Order 116(2) at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The member explained that while the committee was still debating a substantive motion that day, the chair proceeded to the putting of the question on the motion, despite her clearly manifested intention to continue debating the motion. This, she argued, violated Standing Order 116(2), which prevents committee chairs from cutting off debate on a motion when there are committee members still wishing to debate it. She asked the Speaker to use the authority conferred in Standing Order 116(2) to nullify the proceedings on the motion in question and to allow the member to voice her views on it prior to the committee coming to a decision.

[*Translation*]

The member further intervened on September 26, 2024, to emphasize that the Standing Order is in place to safeguard committee members' right to participate in debate on motions before they are put to a vote and a final decision is taken. She asserted that this is so regardless of whether the committee chair is acting intentionally or not.

[*English*]

In response, the chair of the committee, the member for New Brunswick Southwest, assured the House that he believed that the debate had concluded with no further members wishing to speak to the motion. He explained that he did not do so precipitously, wanting to ensure that no member of the committee wished to make additional remarks. He explained that, from his perspective, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills had indicated a desire to speak, but only after the question had been called. He also explained that he had informed the member and the committee that the question had been put and that the only remedy would be for her to appeal his decision. His ruling was ultimately sustained by committee members.

[*Translation*]

Until now, Standing Order 116(2) had only been invoked twice since coming into effect on September 18, 2017. This Standing Order specifies that:

(a) Unless a time limit has been adopted by the committee or by the House, the Chair of a standing, special or legislative committee may not bring a debate to an end while there are members present who still wish to participate. A decision of the Chair in this regard may not be subject to an appeal to the committee.

(b) A violation of paragraph (a) of this section may be brought to the attention of the Speaker by any member and the Speaker shall have the power to rule on the matter. If, in the opinion of the Speaker, such violation has occurred, the Speaker may order that all subsequent proceedings in relation to the said violation be nullified.

● (1535)

[*English*]

As a point of general process, committee chairs should never prematurely end debate while there are still committee members wishing to speak. This key principle is what Standing Order 116(2) is meant to safeguard.

Standing Order 116(2) also empowers the Speaker to exceptionally intervene in procedural concerns arising in committee proceedings without a report from a committee.

[*Translation*]

Called upon to rule for the first time on the operation of the standing order, Speaker Regan stated, on April 1, 2019, at page 26496 of the Debates, and I quote:

At the very core of this new provision, then, stands the desire to allow committee members to participate fully in their deliberations without being unduly stopped from debating matters until their natural conclusion. Defence of this mattered to the extent that it was, in fact, fortified with a recourse, and a new authority for the Speaker, in the event of a clear violation.

He indicated in the same ruling:

Essentially, it seems to the Chair that this new rule is intended to safeguard debate in committee from a procedural hijacking, so to speak, that would permanently end debate on a motion.

[*English*]

The Speaker reviewed the events that occurred at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on September 23, 2024, including relevant video clips, as well as the back-and-forth discussion that occurred between the member and the committee chair.

I would like to make three points about those events. First, it was helpful that the member first raised her concerns about wishing to speak to the motion in committee before doing so in the House. This made it easier to follow the chain of events.

[*Translation*]

Related to that discussion in committee, and my second point, is an argument advanced by the committee chair, as to the fact that the chair's decision was appealed and sustained. This has no bearing on the procedural soundness of the proceedings on the committee motion. As Standing Order 116(2)(a) denotes in its last sentence, and I quote: “A decision of the Chair in this regard may not be subject to an appeal to the committee.”

*Speaker's Ruling*

Therefore, this is not an argument that I considered in assessing this point of order and all members need to be mindful that this is not an option when such situations arise during debate in committee.

[*English*]

Third, the Speaker is convinced that the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills sincerely believed that she had flagged her intent to speak again on the motion and had reason to believe that the committee chair would recognize her before putting the question on the motion. I am equally satisfied that the committee Chair thought that no other committee member wished to continue debate. With that said, from viewing the video of the meeting, it would certainly appear that very little time was afforded to committee members by the chair to indicate their desire to continue debate on the motion before the question was put.

These points provide important context in considering this matter. There is no evidence of an intent to manipulate the process of debate by the chair's proceeding to a decision on the motion in question in this instance, but rather this appears to be a misunderstanding between the member and the chair. The member for New Brunswick Southwest seems to have operated in good faith in presiding over the committee proceedings on September 23, 2024.

[*Translation*]

That being said, such a miscommunication between the committee chair and the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills seems to have led to the unfortunate circumstance of the member missing an opportunity to contribute to debate.

[*English*]

Nevertheless, in the circumstances, I cannot conclude that the committee chair violated Standing Order 116(2). The proceedings of the committee on September 23 can stand. The Chair's decision is in part influenced by the fact that this is still a relatively untested standing order, and that guidance has not really been provided to committee chairs. Going forward, it is likely that the Chair will take a more rigid approach.

Accordingly, to avoid a repetition of this situation, I wish to provide guidance for the benefit of all committee chairs and members.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

When a chair begins to discern that debate is nearing completion, before putting the question, they should take great care to ensure that no other members might wish to debate a motion. For instance, they should call for “resuming debate” or ask members if they are ready for the question. This is similar to the practice in the House and one that committee chairs should emulate.

[*English*]

As well, when members wish to have their name added to the speaking list in committee, they should also ensure they receive an acknowledgement from the chair or the clerk that their name has been added to the list. As members know, it is often the committee clerk who maintains a speaking list for use by the chair. Indeed, it is a best practice that the committee clerk maintains such a list.

I thank all members for their attention.

The hon. member for Nepean is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Mr. Speaker, this is based on the ruling you just made. I was listening very carefully. You did mention that you watched the video, and you also mentioned, to paraphrase, that you saw that the opportunity was not there for the member to speak and that things were possibly rushed through. Should you not give the benefit of doubt to the member in question so the rights of the members are upheld? Is that not of much more importance than the ruling of the chair of the committee?

**The Speaker:** The Chair took great time and care to come up with the decision. I encourage the hon. member to take a closer look at the ruling from the Chair.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills is rising on, I am assuming, a similar point of order.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate your ruling and for the whole table to have taken into account what has happened. I am sure that as you viewed the videos, you would have seen that my hand was raised not at the point that the question was called but way prior to when it was called.

What I have experienced, not just in the public accounts committee but also in the ethics committee and many others, is the consistent, constant bullying from the Conservatives, of my privilege within committees to be able to operate, ask my questions, put forth my viewpoint and give respect to the witnesses who come before our committees on a regular basis.

I do have to say that I am quite disheartened by your ruling, because ultimately what it does is that it puts people like me on the back burner, while there are Conservative games afoot on a regular basis. The Conservatives use regular rules within the Standing Orders to play their games, and we and Canadians are the ones who suffer.

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, I listened patiently to two members on this matter. If there is a genuine issue to raise, then members are, of course—

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

**The Speaker:** Sorry, that was a poor choice of words and I withdraw it. If there is a point of view on a point of order that is new, members are free to stand up. If not, I am going to ask that we put this to bed and move on. I encourage all members to take a look at the matter. I thank all hon. members.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1545)

[Translation]

### PRIVILEGE

#### REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her brilliant speech. It is good to hear the chronology of events, and especially how this Parliament should focus on its priorities.

There is still something about SDTC that bothers me. Just think of the age-old question, “Who benefits from this crime?” I am not implying that there was a crime because, obviously, we did not get the documents. It would be nice to have access to them. That said, for the Conservatives as well, suspending a green fund has consequences. It means no longer investing in innovative technologies and in the energy transition. What consequences does my colleague have in mind?

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Madam Speaker, when we think of the question “who benefits from crime?” I feel like saying that it benefits the friends of the Liberal Party who benefited financially from certain SDTC funds, but also the Conservative Party, because we do not even know where this money is going to be invested. These hundreds of millions of dollars will not necessarily be invested in clean technologies and that is honestly too bad, because so far no Conservative has asked the question, “what will this money be used for now?” It is really too bad.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, what I indicated is that the government has provided information. We know that for a fact. We also know that the members opposite, as the member herself has demonstrated, are able to get into those types of details at the standing committee.

The motion that is before us today is, in essence, asking for us to send the issue over to PROC, which would then allow a more thorough discussion. By debating it endlessly, all we are doing is supporting the Conservatives' attempt to prevent any form of debate on other government legislation. Does the member believe this is healthy for the House of Commons with respect to chamber debate, given the important legislation that needs to be debated and that I am sure thousands of her constituents would be supportive of?

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I feel like telling my hon. colleague that it is not only healthy, but it is also our duty. It is the duty of this Parliament to do everything in its power to obtain the necessary documents for a discussion at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Let us do things properly and respect all the stages. Let us first get the unredacted documents from the government and then go talk about it in committee. For now, we are waiting for answers from the gov-

### Privilege

ernment. It is no one else. It is not the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It is the government who must provide the documents.

[English]

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I certainly thank the member for her accountability with respect to what this place is.

The government would love us to think that this is a debate about some documents or a committee, and that, as the member just stated, we are delaying documents' going to a committee. In fact the debate is all about privilege and the fact that the power of the House is absolute. When the House, which stands for the people, demands documents and the government says no, when the opposition parties, not just the Conservatives but also the NDP and the Bloc, ask for documents and the Liberal government says no, that is a defiance of the people and of the absolute power of this place.

Does the member believe that just sending the issue to committee, as the government wants, is going to be a really good testament to the power and the privilege that are before us here?

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, first of all, what is happening in the House today has happened before. Mr. Harper refused to provide documents about the war in Afghanistan and he lost. Ultimately, he had to hand them over. We hope that the same situation will not persist as long, and that we will get the Liberal Party's documents.

Second, as I mentioned in my speech, this is not just about the primacy of Parliament. Even if the government had a majority, it would be important that it bring the documents to the House. Other questions remain unanswered and are beyond the scope of what the Auditor General of Canada is able to obtain under the Auditor General Act. It is important for this Parliament to address these issues.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her tremendous work at the public accounts committee, where this issue arose. I want to ask the member directly about this serious issue when it comes to the financial accountability of the government. There are two members who are neither Liberal nor Conservative at the committee: myself and the hon. member. We often deal with the financial accountability of the government when we see audits related to this work. We have a serious issue that was presented to us, so of course we voted together to ensure that we got accountability for the documents at our committee. This is important.

What I find troubling is that the Conservatives are only worried about fiscal accountability when it means scoring points for themselves. They are not worried about the financial accountability that comes from trying to learn from their own mistakes when they were in government.

*Privilege*

Could the member please talk about the fact that there is a lot to be learned from the fact that previous governments in Canada, including former Conservative governments, have had serious issues of accountability and corruption? It is worth investigating those issues as a matter of learning for our committee as well.

Will the member speak about the importance of financial accountability, which all parties should think of as equally important, no matter who is in government?

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I really enjoy serving with him on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I think that the two of us manage to get quite a bit of work done on that committee. We make a pretty good team.

It is true that the Conservatives will often take on an issue just because it suits their purposes or because it will provide them with nice video clips. However, this issue goes deeper than that. It is not just about video clips, moral authority or fiscal responsibility. It is more than that. We are talking about serious allegations of corruption, potential fraud and potential embezzlement.

However, the government refuses to provide any documents that could well be relevant. That is a major problem. My colleague and I believe in the supremacy of Parliament and in the fact that democracy depends on trust. That trust is currently being undermined around the world, but also in Canada. What the government is doing is undermining the trust that everyone here needs, whether in Quebec or in Canada.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Madam Speaker, all political power is trust, and when the trust is broken, the power is lost. After nine years of this Liberal government, Canadians have lost trust in this government. To break down what this debate is for people at home, there is \$400 million that was misspent in 186 cases of conflict of interest; there is accountability that this House demands; and when we look at the fact that this whole \$400 million was supposed to be for creating jobs that Canadians desperately want and need, what it really comes down to in this debate today is a matter of privilege and trust.

The people in the committee demanded answers. Then in this House, we have demanded that the documents involved be submitted to the RCMP. The government has refused the absolute power of this House to give what the people asked for, which were documents related to conflict of interest and to the misspending of \$400 million, and for that money, those documents and all the information therein to be given to those who investigate at the RCMP.

This debate here in the House is a matter of privilege. It is not about whether we should do the right thing and just send it to committee. The government was asked to do something by the people in the House of Commons and the government is refusing to do that. That is the debate we are having here today. There is an important saying that the Constitution was created not to protect the government from the people, but to protect the people from the government.

What is at stake here is accountability, the power of the House of Commons, and transparency and trust for all of government, not just the government that is in power. Parliamentary oversight is essential for accountability. The role of Parliament is to hold the government accountable. By refusing to comply with the House of Commons and produce documents, the government undermines this principle and sets a dangerous precedent for evading oversight.

Parliament is like the referee of a hockey game. Without it, the government would just try to score while breaking every rule in the book. Parliament is like the dentist to the government. They do not want to visit, but without it, things would rot fast. Parliament is like Simon Cowell to the government's talent show. They need to hear the harsh truth, whether they like it or not. Parliament is like one's mom checking their room after they cleaned it. The government might think they are off the hook, but Parliament is going to find the mess.

That is the power of government, and that is the power of Parliament. We call ourselves His Majesty's loyal opposition, and we take that role very seriously. As much as we hear today that the government does not like us making videos or talking on social media, that is our job at this point. We would love to be in government someday, and we talk to Canadians about what we might do differently, but the role we have here today is to hold the government to account and to find the mess.

In committees, we find that we work well with other parties when it comes to certain matters sometimes. When it comes to looking at accountability, in this instance, we will find in this House that it is not just the Conservatives but also the NDP and the Bloc members who have all come together and demanded accountability from the government.

To put it in another perspective, for those Canadians at home, what does that matter and what does that mean? Government's power and Parliament's power are absolute. We can talk about another procedure and we can talk about the charter, but nothing is more powerful than that absolute right from the House of Commons and a directive from the House of Commons.

This means that when the House of Commons comes together and asks for documents and for evidence, the government needs to provide those documents and that evidence. It is not a maybe; it is not a "can be". To relate this to the government, let us look at what would happen if the CRA came to me and asked for my financial records and my taxes. However, if, instead of complying, I only gave them a few documents or maybe redacted documents and said I did not want CRA knowing about this part of my business or my personal life, what would happen? There would be fines, penalties and possible jail time. To Canadians at home, this House of Commons is the CRA to the government. This House of Commons has the power to ask for documents and it has to ensure that the government listens to that directive.

• (1555)

There is also the issue of respecting the rule of law on parliamentary privilege. The government's refusal to comply with a clear order of the House of Commons violates the rule of law and weakens the democratic process. If Parliament is to maintain its role as a guardian of democracy, it must stand firm in asserting its privileges. Today, all we hear from the government is, "Just send it to committee. There is the compromise. Just send it to committee." The concern with that is that if we just send it to committee, we are just delaying this issue down the road. It has already happened and we are here only because it was delayed down the road.

This first came to light and the order was made back on June 10. On June 10, the government was asked to hand over to the RCMP what it had in its possession. I am just going to go over what was handed and what was not handed over because the government does say that it handed documents from some organizations and we have some of this documentation.

Well, yes, the Canada School of Public Service, Canada Energy Regulator, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Library and Archives Canada, and the Office of Privacy Commissioner have given full compliance, and there are a few others. Without redactions and with partial delayed compliance were the Department of Finance and Treasury Board Secretariat.

Then, we have redacted records. The redacted records are documents with a bunch of black on them. Sometimes, whole sheets are blacked out. We have Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; Business Development Bank of Canada; Canada Revenue Agency; Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development; Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities; and Department of Justice, partial compliance by deadline, with one tranche deposited before transmission to the RCMP, another tranche deposited after transmittal and many documents withheld entirely; Department of National Defence; Department of Natural Resources, but limited scope of production to directors general and above; Department of Public Works and Government Services; Department of Western Economic Diversification; Export Development Canada; Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario; Pacific Economic Development Canada; Privy Council Office; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; Standards Council of Canada; and Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, the whole organization we are trying to look at.

We had full-out refusal from two departments, saying they were not getting us any documents: the Communications Security Establishment and the Public Sector Pension Investment Board.

It was a simple request, and we can see from multiple departments there was never a simple answer and the documents were never given to where they needed to go. The government's claim that handing over unredacted documents would violate the charter is just an excuse to dodge accountability. Let us be clear: The charter protects individual rights and not the government's right to hide how it spent taxpayer dollars.

Imagine again if someone being audited by CRA said, "I am not handing over my documents because it is a violation of my rights." That would not fly. CRA would demand full transparency because

### *Privilege*

it is about accountability and ensuring no wrongdoing occurred. This is not a charter violation. It is about the government trying to cover its tracks. Canadians have the right to know where their money went and the government cannot use the charter as a shield to avoid answering for potential misuse of public funds. If the government really believes in transparency, it should hand over the full documents and let the facts speak for themselves.

History provides us with lessons on the consequences of defying parliamentary authority. Let us not forget the case of King Charles I, who refused to acknowledge Parliament's rights and authority. His actions led to a constitutional crisis and his eventual downfall. While we live in a very different time, the principle remains the same: When the executive refuses to respect the will of Parliament, it weakens democracy and erodes the foundations of governance. The government may argue that Parliament overstepped by ordering documents to be handed to the RCMP, but this claim does not hold up. Parliament has the power to demand documents from the government, period. The RCMP can review and investigate if needed, but Parliament is tasked with holding the government accountable.

• (1600)

In the ruling, the Speaker clearly affirmed that the House of Commons has the absolute authority to demand documents from the government without limits unless it explicitly decides otherwise. The government's argument that sharing these documents with the RCMP oversteps Parliament's authority does not hold up under these established rules. The Speaker acknowledged this authority, stating that the motion for the production of documents has already been passed and should have been complied with.

The Speaker also recommended that the matter be referred to a committee for further study, citing the unusual nature of the order, specifically the fact that it involves sending the documents to a third party. However, this suggestion is procedural. It does not negate the original demand from Parliament. We have an absolute right as parliamentarians to demand the production of documents, and the government has to produce those documents.

Here is why the committee route is also not appropriate for this case. Parliament already made a clear demand, which came from committee, and referring this issue to a committee is a way to delay compliance and avoid accountability. The Speaker stated that the government has not fully complied with the order and that the House has the right to decide whether it is satisfied with the response, not a committee. Delaying by sending it to a committee is kicking the can down the road, wasting more time instead of giving Canadians the transparency they deserve right now.

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Canadians have so much pain. We spend our time in our constituencies, and all of us know that Canadians are having a hard time feeding and housing themselves right now. They are having a hard time going to the grocery store. These are real issues. I talk routinely about the problems we have with everyday items that other people across the world can afford, like cellphones. The average cellphone bill right now in Canada is over \$106. As Canadians use more data, they are finding their cellphone bills have gone up. Telus and Bell just announced they are going to increase the rates for international roaming, at a time when we already pay the highest fees. They are just finding more ways to get money out of Canadians.

We can talk about other big issues. Let us look at trade and what has happened in Canada since we signed CUSMA. Canada was kicked out of the negotiations at the G7 summit for three months when the Prime Minister made the comment that we were not helping. Trade negotiators were kicked out for three months. Mexico made a better deal with the Americans, and what has happened? Mexico is now the Americans' number one trade partner when it used to be Canada. That is two million jobs, trade and paycheques for Canadians.

We have a duty in this House, and we all speak as parliamentarians. When we are elected, we all do it for one "why". My why has always been my children and others who want to have a better life in Canada. I want a good life for my children and grandchildren. I want them to be able to afford a home, go to the grocery store and afford groceries, get a good education, get good health care and get a good job that pays a good paycheque so they can live a life. I want that for all Canadians. However, the more we are enthralled by issues that waste taxpayer money, by high taxes and by issues that make Canadians unable to find and afford a home, the more the dream is slipping away for many Canadians. It is so bad that the children of Canadians who do not have a home now will probably not be able to afford one.

Today, we must reaffirm the supremacy of Parliament and the importance of transparent governance. When this House ordered the production of documents relating to the SDTC scandal, it did so to uphold its duty of accountability to Canadians. Parliament's right to demand documents is absolute. Any suggestion otherwise is a dangerous misinterpretation of democratic principles.

● (1605)

The refusal to comply is not just an oversight; it is a deliberate obstruction of parliamentary privilege. We must not allow any government to selectively decide which rules to follow. This is not a question of politics. This is a question of preserving the integrity of our democracy and the trust of the citizens who elect us.

The argument that sending documents to the RCMP violates the charter rights of Canadians is deeply flawed. Parliament's order does not dictate what the RCMP should or should not do with the documents. It simply provides the information necessary to investigate possible wrongdoings. Our role is to ensure no stone is left unturned when public funds are mishandled. The government's attempt to block this process cannot stand. Upholding transparency is not a violation of rights; it is the very act of protecting them.

The government's refusal to comply with the House order is a challenge to the authority of this Parliament and a direct affront to the principles of democratic oversight. Today, we must make it clear that no government can shield itself from scrutiny and no charter right can be used to hide the truth from the people. Let the House stand firm in its commitment to uphold democracy, transparency and accountability, for anything less would be an abdication of our duties for Canadians.

Parliamentary oversight is essential for accountability. Parliament's right to demand documents is absolute. Respect for the rule of law and parliamentary privilege is the whole premise and duty of parliamentarians in this place, the House of Commons. There is no conflict between Parliament and the RCMP. The RCMP can decide to do whatever it likes with the documents that are in front of it.

Government obstruction is a pattern, and it has happened before. It happened last in 2021 with the national microbiology lab. Two scientists there needed to be examined. This exact same thing happened and it resulted in an election.

To quote Theodore Roosevelt from back in the 1900s, "No man is above the law and no man is below it; nor do we ask any man's permission when we require him to obey it." A hundred years later, the same thing holds true. The government is not above the law and is not below it either, nor do we ask the government's permission when we ask it to obey. This is a privilege motion by the House of Commons, which represents the common people. This place, which we walk into every day, is green to remind us of the people who used to work in the fields, and this place has demanded an answer from the government.

For all of us parliamentarians, who represent the people back home who want accountability and transparency, and on behalf of those people, we ask for our privilege to be honoured.

● (1610)

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I heard the member speak quite a bit about the Constitution, so I am sure he is well aware that the three branches of our system of government, which are the executive, the legislative and the judiciary, have separate powers and separate constraints too.

The RCMP wrote to the law clerk of the House of Commons in July saying that it cannot use the records received through this process for the investigation, as the charter rights of the suspect are affected. That is number one. Number two, the Auditor General has expressed concerns that we are blurring the division of powers and responsibilities.



First, are we not being counterproductive in giving the RCMP what it needs? The RCMP understands that it has a legal process for obtaining the records and documents, whatever it needs, to start an investigation. Does he not recognize that?

Second, can the member confirm that Ms. Annette Verschuren, the former chair of SDTC, who is central to this question, was the adviser to two former Conservative prime ministers, was a donor to the Conservative Party and, in fact, donated two years back during the leadership race for the Conservative Party?

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, the RCMP can refuse or take the documents. It is no different than any other investigation. It is absolutely false to say the RCMP has said it does not want the documents. Of course it wants any document that adheres to this investigation. The only one stopping that is the government. Also, if the RCMP says that it is not going to use them, why is the government not giving up the documents? What are we holding them back for?

To go back to the original premise of this, the power of the House is absolute and goes over any of the rights the RCMP has. This is the people's House. The documents have been requested from the people's House, and the government needs to give up the documents on behalf of the people.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Before I go to further questions, I will ask hon. members who are speaking or who put their mics on to take their phones away from their mics. When they vibrate, they cause feedback to the interpreters, which can be quite disturbing.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Montcalm.

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the more I listen to this debate, the more I get the sense that the government is just saying that it is urgent to move forward, but that its actions say otherwise. We ask Liberal Party members in the House questions. We tell them that seniors are waiting, but we get no answers. There is no one on the other end of the line.

Concerning supply management, the government says it would like the Senate to stop stalling the bill in committee, but it is not doing anything.

We say to the House that the documents must be handed over. The documents are necessary so that the committee can do its job properly to determine whether contempt of Parliament has occurred. If it has, we will make the appropriate decisions about whether or not to bring down the government.

Either way, there is inertia on the other side of the House. Does my colleague agree with my interpretation?

[English]

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, the member is just figuring out that the government is inert. The government has given us many examples and reasons to topple it. It lost trust and transparency a long time ago.

The member is relying on the government and the Senate to put a bill through. He should not rely on the government. The people do

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not trust it. It has lost the trust of the people should have lost the trust of the member a long time ago.

• (1615)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we are supporting the motion. We believe the information should be available to Canadians, who are opposed to Liberal scandals.

I listened very attentively to my Conservative colleague's speech, and what he omitted to say was that when the Conservatives were in power under the Harper regime, they did even worse than the Liberals. I just want to point out some of the scandals that the Conservatives refused to allow committees to look into, for which they shut down Parliament and refused to provide any documents. This was systemic—

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am anticipating it to be a fairly exhaustive list. I am prepared to give leave for the member to express—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member will have the same time as everybody else for asking questions.

The hon. member for Bay of Quinte is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, if they are getting more time, I would like at least four hours to list the Liberal scandals—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Let us stop joking with this serious matter.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, it is a very serious matter.

For the anti-terrorism funding of \$3.1 billion, there was never any paper trail established. The Harper government shut down any examination of that. The Phoenix pay system, which woefully the Liberals implemented, was put into place by the Conservatives at a cost of \$2.2 billion. At no point during the Harper regime did the Conservatives permit any examination of this \$2.2-billion boondoggle. The misspending for the G8 was \$1 billion. The Harper regime Conservatives shut down any inquiry into that, and the ETS scandal was \$400 million.

Do the Conservatives now admit that they were absolutely wrong to stop Parliament and stop all committees from examining the many Conservative scandals?

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his statement, the member said he agrees with the motion and that we are one step away. I think we are almost one step away from a non-confidence motion. Maybe we can agree to finally topple the government.

We know that the list of scandals of the government is long. We also know that the NDP has supported the government along. Is it not time to demand accountability, to demand transparency and to stand up for the people in this House and demand that these documents be released?

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**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the speech by my colleague, the member for Bay of Quinte, and he touched on all the key points. I would like him to elaborate a little more, if he could, on the claim that there is only one way for the police to start an investigation, as the government House leader likes to look at the bottom half of the Speaker's ruling and not the top half. The Speaker ruled that there is a prima facie case of a breach of privilege.

What that means, for people at home, is that the documents the House requested have not been provided. Charles I lost his head as King of England over the issue of defying the House. I am not saying that this is what should happen to the Liberals, but the fact is that the Crown is defying the House order, and Liberals have been found in breach of that, essentially in contempt of the House.

Would the member comment on why they think that is the only way the police can go? If we were an employer, like I know that member was, we would have turned over the documents to the police, would we not?

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, I would have been made to turn them over by the police, and that is the difference we have in Parliament. It is a funny thing that we have to stand here in a question of privilege, delaying the work of the House, because Parliament is demanding, and the Speaker, the Bloc and the NDP and the Conservatives have demanded, documents to be released. The only reason we are here debating and taking time away from the House today is that the government is refusing.

Yes, the RCMP will use the information. It can refuse it if it likes. It can start investigations any way it chooses. Yes, it has confirmed that it has started an investigation into the \$400 million in misused funds.

Let us listen to Parliament for once and get the documents to the RCMP.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, due to time, the NDP House leader missed a number of scandals, but I would like to highlight a couple of others. We could talk about the Senate scandal from the Conservative Party. What about not one but two election scandals?

Conservative scandals aside, there is the independent agency of the RCMP and there is the independent agency of the Auditor General, both of which have said that the game the Conservatives are playing today ultimately causes a great deal of concern. It is all tied into issues such as the charter, which is relatively important, I would suggest. Does the member not have any concerns, when the two independent agencies are questioning, at least in part, what the Conservatives are doing?

• (1620)

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, my concern is the government's defiance of the absolute power of this place. The power of the House of Commons trumps anything else the government wants to create as a distraction. Why are we in a question of privilege? The government could have ended the debate a couple of days ago.

We are here today because all of the parties are united in the fact that this place, Parliament, on behalf of the people, has the absolute

authority to ask the government for accountability and to demand that it gets the documents it required and demanded from the government. The government's defiance of that is a defiance of democracy, transparency and accountability.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this space to speak to the issues that are important to the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

I was speaking with a constituent in the Nicola Valley, who raised an issue with me about how they were starting to feel about the fact that after the next election there will be changes to our riding boundaries; the Nicola Valley will be in a different riding and I will not be in that particular race. They were commenting about how they did not like the change. I told them that I did not like the change either but that sometimes we need to move with the times.

However, I also said that some things should not change. A constituent's member of Parliament, whoever he or she is, should be accountable to them and do their utmost to bring their voice to the chamber. It may be a different member of Parliament, but that should never change. We should always remember who elected us and whom we are here to serve.

This is a reminder to all members who are not members of the cabinet. Essentially, all of us who are not part of the cabinet, the government itself, are here to hold the government to account. As the previous speaker, the member for the Bay of Quinte said, government is tied to the hip of Parliament to be held accountable. We give it exceptional powers. With those exceptional powers there is supposed to be accountability to the representatives.

I know that some members have talked about the three different branches: the judiciary, the executive and the legislative. I respect that, but let us respect the place that we are in. Let us respect that we all have that particular job to do.

One of the interesting arguments I have heard in the media and in the chamber is about issues around charter rights if the government follows through on the original production order made by the chamber. The government said that it cannot share any personal information because it would violate people's charter rights if it gave documents with personal information to the RCMP.

First of all, I would point to section 1 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which essentially says that where Parliament chooses in a free and open democratic society to pass a law that gets what it considers the right balance on charter rights, then that is okay. Ultimately the Supreme Court will determine whether Parliament was able to get the balancing act right. Everything is on the table.

*Privilege*

Second, the RCMP is a creation of Parliament. It adheres to our laws, particularly the Privacy Act. In fact, the RCMP website says that with respect to any information supplied to it, the RCMP will follow and adhere to everything required of it under the Privacy Act. The RCMP will not share Canadians' information.

As a reminder, here we are, talking about the requirement of the government to produce documents to the chamber that we would give to the RCMP, which, under the Privacy Act, is bound to protect the privacy of individuals who are mentioned. This is information about a program that was funded by taxpayers. Sustainable Development Technology Canada was a federal body created by an act of Parliament. All of its monies and all of its activities were ultimately responsible to the chamber, which was why the former minister of innovation, science and economic development was the minister responsible to the chamber for the green slush fund.

I think it is important to ask whether the government is saying that if it does produce the documents, the RCMP is going to give out the personal information of people working in a publicly funded program, willy-nilly. That is what it is saying. It is essentially saying that the RCMP is not capable of operating a tight ship, according to the law. That is the criticism the government is laying down by saying that there are privacy concerns.

● (1625)

We are not saying that the information should be given to everyone. The Privacy Act has very clear stipulations about an access to information request and what information one can receive. There are rules that are well codified and well laid out, and ultimately the government should respect that fact.

Therefore let us put to bed the whole conversation about privacy when it comes to people who have participated in the federal Sustainable Development Technology program and who, as part of that, have voted for their own companies to receive large amounts, in a situation where the Auditor General found huge discrepancies with respect to conflict of interest over hundreds of millions of dollars. I hope we will hear nothing more about the so-called privacy concerns.

I will now return to the amendment that the Conservatives have made to the motion we are debating, which reads:

That the motion be amended by adding the following:

“provided that it be an instruction to the committee:

(a) that the following witnesses be ordered to appear before the committee, separately, for two hours each:

- (i) the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry,
- (ii) the Clerk of the Privy Council,
- (iii) the Auditor General of Canada,
- (iv) the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,
- (v) the Deputy Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada,
- (vi) the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons,
- (vii) the Acting President of Sustainable Development Technology Canada,
- (viii) a panel consisting of the Board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada; and

(b) that it report back to the House no later than Friday, November 22, 2024.”

The amendment is giving important instructions so we can get to the bottom of the issue.

I am going to step back from the motion for a second to say one thing. One of our members from Ontario, today in question period, raised a really important question, effectively asking what is in the documents that the government would stonewall its obligations to Parliament.

Some might just say that it is the egomaniacs who find themselves in the current Prime Minister's Office who are saying, “Let's be obstinate. Let's just say that we don't have to, that we're not subject to them.” Well, the message is that the executive branch rules the roost and that it has no responsibilities to anyone. As someone who believes in the rule of law, I would simply say that it is up to us as an institution, as men and women of the House of Commons, to push back, because no one person is exceptional. That is why we have the rule of law and not the rule of a man or a woman, where they get to decide.

The second thing I would point out is that when we are talking about the conduct of the current government, its members could be saying, “Wow, we allowed some horrible things to happen, and they could be criminal, definitely unethical, under the SDTC process.” However, now that they realize how shockingly bad it is, they do not want to see the information go to the RCMP, because it may have evidence to open a case file but may not have all the pieces of the puzzle to be able to have a broad range of charges to bring forward.

I am clearly openly speculating on this. Why am I? It is because in the vacuum provided by the government, speculation will roar in. Why is that? It is because it is a head-scratcher. Why would the government stonewall a production order by the House? It is either because of ego or because it is so overwhelmingly bad that the government does not want to own up to it publicly.

**An hon. member:** Corrupt.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, someone just said “corrupt”. It could be, but if the Liberals will not come forward to tell otherwise, to show their work and to show the RCMP that they have dealt with the House order, then we are left to wonder. That is on them; it is not on us as members.

● (1630)

I know we have had many days of debate on this, and it is unfortunate because there are lots of things we could be debating, like housing, affordability and crime. Bill C-48 has been a massive failure. People are still getting out on bail, committing crimes and hurting families, not just in B.C. but right across the country. There is so much we could be doing, but we cannot argue those things until we resolve this.

*Privilege*

I really push the government members, the ones who are listening right now. This does not just fall on the Prime Minister. It falls on you. Tomorrow, you will have a caucus and if you do not put pressure on the Prime Minister in those areas, to say, "I want us to be able—"

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, is the member asking the Speaker to put pressure on the Prime Minister? I do not think that is appropriate. I know you do have a caucus tomorrow, Madam Speaker, but he is saying "you will be putting pressure" and I just want to clarify.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would not be putting any pressure on anyone. I would advise the member to be prudent in his use of words.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, you put the right kind of pressure on all of us. I would hope that the member would only rise if there was the occasion of a real point of order.

As I said, we have been debating this so long we may have forgotten why we are having this debate. We must not forget we are talking about over 180 conflicts of interest involving \$330 million. I know other members have said it is more than that. Those are not the government's dollars, but the dollars of the citizens we represent. They send their hard-earned tax dollars to the government with the expectation that they be treated with care. By being treated with care, they mean not for narrow or partisan interests but for the public interest. How can we tell if money is spent correctly? We may disagree on priorities or the reasons for said spending, but we should always be alerted when an officer of Parliament raises concerns.

[*Translation*]

What happened? As the Auditor General told us, but only after a whistle-blower came forward, I would add, she discovered that over \$330 million in contracts had been improperly awarded by this Liberal-appointed board of directors. She was also surprised to discover that these same Liberal-appointed board members had all kinds of conflicts of interest.

[*English*]

One wonders if they were getting advice from Mark Carney back then. Just to recap, there were 186 conflicts of interest involving \$330 million that improperly went out the door. Much of this money was directly funnelled into board members' companies. Aside from the obvious conflicts of interest, it was also revealed that some of these projects were not even eligible for funding under this program.

This is where it gets truly insulting to Canadians. I have constituents who, through no fault of their own, were overpaid CERB money. When this happened, as we all know, the CRA clawed back the money. That is the end of the story, full stop. What happens here? What happens to all the money paid out wrongly to ineligible corporations run by Liberal insiders? Will it be clawed back in the same way it would be for everyday Canadians who work and pay their bills, or will this be different? As is so often the case when it comes to the Prime Minister, there is one set of rules for everyone else and one set of rules for him and his friends.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

I have been listening to this debate for several days now, and not once have I heard a single Liberal member demand that all this money be recovered. Why is that? Why is there always a different set of rules for the Prime Minister and his friends?

It was quite something when the leader of the NDP recently flip-flopped on the carbon tax, and the Liberals gleefully accused the NDP of caving in to pressure. However, when the Liberals caved in to pressure and exempted home heating oil from the carbon tax, that was different, was it not? It is okay for the Liberals cave, but not for anyone else.

Of course, we all know it is not acceptable to try to hide the documents that allowed this green slush fund to enrich the Liberals' cronies. That is, of course, why we are here, as the Liberals try to hide these documents.

[*English*]

What is most insulting is that the Prime Minister's Office has come out with the most politically absurd defence imaginable, and that is saying a lot for this particular Prime Minister's Office, given the great many scandals. It claims the Liberals are standing up for the charter in trying to hide these documents as they run from accountability. Who dreamt this up?

I had a constituent ask me if the Liberals are seriously arguing they have a charter right to engage in corruption. On the Liberal side of the House, the members will not want to hear that. They will say that is not what they are trying to say, but the problem for the Liberal government is that this is all Canadians are hearing, because this is what happens when a government has zero credibility and a well-documented track record of corruption and failure.

To be clear, I also want to say that I realize many members on the Liberal side of the House are not directly responsible for what has happened here. We all know there is a small and powerful group of unelected people within the Prime Minister's Office who call the shots. Likewise, we know that certain ministers remain ministers at the Prime Minister's cabinet table because they will do what they are told and they will also look the other way.

This is exactly what allowed the SDTC green slush fund to enrich wealthy Liberal friends and insiders. A minister did what he was told and looked the other way. Only a whistle-blower stood in the way, and now we see a desperate Prime Minister's Office trying to hide behind the charter as a defence for Liberal corruption.

The lengths the Prime Minister's Office will go to cover this up are incredible. That is why we are here, and oddly, as I said earlier, the Prime Minister's Office does not seem to care. As long as it can hide from transparency and accountability, that is all that matters. It makes me wonder what is within those documents the Liberals are so terrified of, but if the Prime Minister's Office has its way, we just will never know.

Before I conclude my speech, let me ask a simple question of the Liberal side of the House. When the members eventually leave this place, either through an election or on their own, and when they look back at this green slush fund, they will know the facts. That there were 186 conflicts of interest is a fact. That over \$330 million improperly went out the door is a fact.

[*Translation*]

Did they come here to defend the Prime Minister's Office, or did they come to make a difference in their community? I think most are here for the second reason. They have a real chance to do something meaningful here.

• (1640)

[*English*]

They must tell the Prime Minister's Office that enough is enough. It is time to come clean, stop hiding the truth and send a message that in Canada, transparency and accountability still matter. That does not change. It is time to send a message that they could always be proud of the day they stood up and said enough is enough to the Prime Minister's Office, because Canadians deserve better. Many of the Liberals deserve better from their Prime Minister. We all do.

Let me thank all the members of this place for hearing my comments today. I look forward to their questions.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when SDTC messed up and the government was made aware of it, the government took serious actions, everything from replacement of the board to internal reviews. We have had a national auditor. We have had endless hours of debate within standing committee. Also, we have provided assurances that the taxpayer will, in fact, receive accountability on the issue.

If we take a look at the motion, what they are saying is they want to grab information, even though we have provided information. The problem the Conservatives have, they say, is that parts of it are redacted. This is just like information from every other government, including Stephen Harper's, that provides redacted documents, but that is not good enough.

They want to grab everything, all the details, and hand it directly over to the RCMP. The RCMP as an institution has said that makes it uncomfortable. However, the Conservative Party still believes, for its political gain, that it will push this issue and attach the word "corruption", even though the chair of the committee was an adviser to Brian Mulroney, to Stephen Harper and also to Jim Flaherty.

Does the member not see some possible hypocrisy?

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, let us bear in mind the facts. The minister responsible knew about this for 40 months and did not

### *Privilege*

say anything. It was only when this became public that Liberals started taking action.

If the government was really serious about taking action and making this whole process accountable, why does it continue to stonewall the chamber on all of its other business because it will not give the documents to a trusted agency, the RCMP, which is at arm's length? The RCMP will follow the law of the Privacy Act of Canada and ensure the privacy of all information.

The member says that is the kind of action Canadians want. No, they want the Prime Minister to own up to what he used to say, that sunlight is the best disinfectant. The member is making this whole process opaque. He is running cover for both the Prime Minister and the minister responsible.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):**

Madam Speaker, I agree with most of what my colleague from British Columbia said, including about the current Liberal government's obligation to be accountable. I am looking ahead a bit, and I would like to know what commitments the Conservatives will make, because I think that once these documents are made public, there will be some scores to settle.

I wonder about some of SDTC's results. SDTC provided \$1.7 billion in funding for businesses to implement projects that supported nearly 25,000 direct and indirect jobs and generated more than \$3 billion in revenues, with a total of \$13.27 billion in follow-on financing generated by SDTC-funded companies since 2001.

Does my Conservative colleague promise that once the necessary cleanup is done, the commitments to innovation and sustainable development for the energy transition will be maintained?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the intervention from the member from Quebec. Anyone who says they agree with me in a public is a brave person.

I referred earlier to the difference between the public interest and the public trust. I believe this motion is on the public trust, because Parliament has its fundamental role of accountability and the government has its role to be accountable. That is what we are talking about. His arguments about SDTC and its future are debatable. We can have legitimate policy disagreements about the future of that organization given some of this mess, but right now, it is the government that must be held accountable.

I hope we can have a conversation about the public interest, but right now, we need to preserve the public trust, and that means getting the minority government to be accountable to this chamber.

*Privilege*

• (1645)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, for days now Parliament has called to move the scandal to an investigation so we can get to the bottom of it, but the Conservatives are blocking all kinds of work on crime and health so they can filibuster with their endless speeches. It is all based on the fact that they think people have no memory.

I, with my grey hair, was here when Brian Mulroney was caught accepting money in a brown paper bag in a hotel room. That is normally what bikers get caught doing. He was the prime minister of the country, but he was a Conservative. I was here when Tony Clement took \$50 million of border protection money and gave it out through his bogus little network to have sunken boats, fake lakes and gazebos.

Here is the thing. Does everyone remember, during the pandemic, when people could not go to work and the Conservatives were saying not to give them money because it would make them lazy? It was CERB money that was meant for waitresses, factory workers, people who could not go to their jobs because of the pandemic. Stephen Harper said it was “overkill” and “bad macroeconomic policy on an enormous scale”.

What Stephen Harper did not tell us is he was scamming the taxpayers for CERB money for him and his associates. This is a guy whose claim, when he gets \$250,000 a year in pension, is that people give him money for the advice of a G7 leader. Is this the kind of guy who needed CERB payments? We will never see a single Conservative stand up and say someone should pay the money back when it is one of their hacks or friends. They will go along with it. If a Conservative gets caught with their hand in the honey pot, Conservatives will say it is okay, but it is not okay. It is not the—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member has just been here too long, but he has become cynical.

He reminds me of Don Quixote. Don Quixote had all the right intentions, but because he could not perceive reality properly, he strode off at windmills, just to prove the point that he was a knight.

Sometimes, the cowboy should go off into the sunset. I would suggest this member from Ontario do that.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would remind the hon. member that we are all at the will of our constituents, and they are the only ones who could make that decision.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have the privilege and honour to sit in the House on behalf of the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent and to know my colleague from British Columbia. I thank him and congratulate him on his French and his efforts to learn the language.

During his speech, the member highlighted the reason we are in the House today to debate this motion, which seeks to shed light on one of the most outrageous scandals this Liberal administration has been involved in.

The scale of it is not unlike the sponsorship scandal, multiplied by five. Nearly \$400 million of tax dollars, Canadian workers' money, was not managed responsibly. The Auditor General concluded that the fund's administrators, friends of the Liberal Party, took this money by the fistful and paid it to their own companies 186 times.

That is why we are here. Could the member tell me why the government is refusing to respond to the House's order to allow the RCMP access to all the necessary documentation?

• (1650)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, there will be a lot of discussion about Liberal accountability in the next election. As my colleague said, the problem right now is that the Liberals are not providing the information that is required of them. The government has no respect for Parliament. We need to stand firm on our decision to force this government to be accountable.

[English]

We will press, not just because the order demands it but also because we respect ourselves.

## ACCESS TO PARLIAMENT HILL

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am rising to respond to the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Thornhill on October 7.

We believe that all Canadians have a right to peaceful protest. However, my intervention strictly deals with whether this matter constitutes a prima facie question of privilege.

The member cited *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, third edition, at page 107, which states, “In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.”

The member also cited page 110, which states:

Incidents involving physical obstruction—such as traffic barriers, security cordons and union picket lines either impeding Members' access to the Parliamentary Precinct or blocking their free movement within the precinct—as well as occurrences of physical assault...have been found to be prima facie cases of privilege.

Both of these citations refer to members being impeded because members have parliamentary privilege. The situation that the member describes does not involve members and, as such, this does not constitute a question of privilege.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** 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 Calgary Centre, Finance; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Public Safety; the hon. member for Oxford, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

[English]

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Madam Speaker, today's debate is an important one, as it involves Canadians' hard-earned taxpayer dollars. It involves the ruling of the Speaker with respect to the production of documents ordered by the House, on the scandal involving Sustainable Development Technology Canada, something that unfortunately has become known as the Liberal billion-dollar green flush fund. The House had ordered the production of the documents around the scandal to the law clerk, with the intent that the documents could then be provided to the RCMP for investigation.

However, the will of the House has been hijacked by the Prime Minister's Privy Council Office. In its infinite wisdom, the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, decided to execute the order by telling departments to provide documents but heavily redact them. That decision was a breach of members' privilege. The order was not some plaything for the PCO or the Prime Minister. The order did not ask for redaction. That is why we find ourselves here today, discussing an issue that involves the primacy of Parliament over all things.

One would think that is a fairly important element in our Canadian democracy. The matter has also been referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for further consideration. We nonetheless clearly see some objections from the government. Imagine, the government even rolled in allegations that all of this is some alleged breach of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It strains credulity and it is a total farce to argue a charter breach. Arguing that Parliament cannot receive documents that could assist the RCMP in its investigation of possible wrongdoing is not acceptable. There is no breach of the charter. There is, however, a clear-cut example of obfuscation and of impeding a criminal investigation. How did we get to all of this?

A beautifully sounding entity was established in 2001, with an ambitious name: Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It had the noble purpose of giving taxpayer financial assistance to green technology companies before they could become commercialized. It was a marvellous mandate with beneficial objectives, but from the time the Liberal government was elected, unfortunately SDTC controlled a billion dollars of taxpayer money that has since become what is now known today as the green slush fund.

Sadly, some probing by parliamentary committees found cause for serious concern. A whopping 82% of funding transactions approved by the SDTC board of directors during a five-year sample period examined by the Auditor General of Canada were deemed to be "conflicted". For anyone who understands how auditing is done, that was just a random sample. A random sample produced a whopping 82% of transactions that were conflicted. One does not have to be a professional auditor to realize that if a random sample shows 82%, that is just the tip of the iceberg.

*Privilege*

According to the Auditor General, the confliction represents \$330 million of taxpayer money being given to companies that had a conflict of interest. SDTC board members voted on giving funding to those companies. Moreover, the Auditor General found that the same board thought it was okay to approve another \$59 million in projects that they were not authorized to do and that were outside the mandate of the very foundation the government and Parliament set up.

To put it bluntly, the board broke SDTC contribution agreements. In their role as SDTC directors, those directors broke Canadian conflict of interest laws as public office holders, and they broke the SDTC Act itself. That is quite the accomplishment. At the very least, such activities uncovered by the Auditor General would certainly warrant examination by appropriate authorities. Why then is it such an affront to the Liberal government and the PCO to have the allegations delved into further by the RCMP?

If laws were broken and a federal act was ignored, why would the government not want to get to the bottom of it? Instead, the government has done its best to circumvent Parliament and an order from the Speaker to provide the documents. Why would that be the case? Why would the government not provide the documents? They are documents that could divulge the existence of improprieties.

● (1655)

The statutes are clear enough. People who are given Governor in Council appointments by the government to oversee taxpayer money are not to personally profit from their work, nor is their family. However, evidence has come to light that, in a five-year period, there were 405 transactions approved by the board. The Auditor General sampled only 226, about half, and found that 186 of those transactions were conflicted. That is the 82%. That is the \$330 million. It is likely that more transactions are conflicted.

Is the reluctance exhibited by the Liberals to provide the requested documents predicated on their not wanting to admit that their selected SDTC board directors presided over transactions and gave millions in taxpayer money to the wrong people, who acted to benefit their own companies? Does the government want to know the truth and what the conflicts in question were? We see such a refusal to get to the bottom of what occurred; why would the government not want to know what these conflicts are? What was the value of the benefits obtained, and who benefited?

*Privilege*

What is obscene is that, in some cases investigated by the Auditor General, according to meeting minutes, SDTC directors would stay in the room while the board was voting on their own project. What kind of unacceptable procedures and operations were being conducted?

It is unconscionable that, in one case, a member of the SDTC board received \$114 million for green companies that the director had invested in. I guess it is a great game, if one can get it. What is even worse is that, after the SDTC board member's own company received \$114 million in taxpayer money, its value tripled. Getting an SDTC grant is a stamp of approval from the Government of Canada that allows these companies to raise other funds. Adding to this case is that the director's lobbyist was the individual's in-house lobbyist for 10 years before he was elected. That lobbyist is none other than the current Minister of Environment.

Given this kind of activity, it is little wonder that the Liberal government does not want any facts or truths to come forward. This is a disgrace. The government has resisted providing the SDTC documents and, by doing so, has stymied the investigation process. It is clear why. With just a limited examination by the Auditor General, it appears that \$390 million of taxpayer money has gone to Liberal insiders. This is likely what the government is attempting to conceal. This is why the Liberal government is opposing that order and the production of documents, which would then be turned over to the RCMP. If the Liberal government wanted to hide what went on within SDTC, producing highly redacted documents would now make perfect sense. Why would the Liberals want to have anything to do with the malfeasance and abuse of taxpayer money? What arrogance is this?

It is likely that the 226 of the 400 or so transactions identified by the Auditor General are just the tip of the money-giveaway iceberg, even though they represent \$390 million. Strangely, all of this does not seem to worry the Liberals in the slightest. The SDTC board, by all accounts, appears to have caught on to the game well. It used to put out a quarterly report on every company it dealt with and assisted with funding, but it does not do so anymore.

We are here today debating the Speaker's ruling on the privilege motion with respect to the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, redacting documents. This was done against the House order to provide documents regarding the Liberal green slush fund to the law clerk to be transferred to the RCMP for investigation. We are debating, but there really is no need for debate.

● (1700)

There is, however, a great need for upholding the supremacy of Parliament and for our government to support the rule of law rather than trying to subvert it. This issue concerns systemic conflicts of interest and corruption with the green slush fund. At present, we only know that \$390 million was disposed of. As of today, a forensic audit has not been done by the Auditor General. The Auditor General did, however, conduct a sampling of things.

This whole affair is also important because Parliament is the highest court in the land, and the Speaker is its servant. An order from the Speaker must be upheld and not doctored to withhold evidence. These are fundamental elements of democracy. They matter and so does the wise, legal and worthy expenditures of taxpayers'

money. Taxpayers work hard, and their money must be used responsibly and in a way that maximizes benefit for them, for Canadians, not Liberal insiders.

Instead of focusing on assisting an investigation by the RCMP into what went on with the Liberals' green slush fund, we are here today trying to end the delay and obfuscation to obtain readable evidence and get to the truth. However, the Liberal government is fighting it every step of the way. Why is it that despite the billowing smoke of corruption at such unprecedented levels, the House finds itself having to request that the Liberal government abide by the Speaker's ruling and produce documents that can be read so the information can be transferred to a full investigation by the RCMP? It should be quite straightforward. However, it is far from that.

The House is in a pitched battle right now to access information and determine the truth of the green slush fund. We have to ask, is there more corruption yet to surface from the Liberals' green slush fund? Are there charges that should be laid? Who knows the truth, as Parliament is being shielded from it? That is not acceptable to the House. What do we know? What we do know is that the appropriate use of taxpayers' money must always be the rule, not the exception.

● (1705)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, like the Conservative opposition, the member makes reference to Liberal insiders. I am not sure if he is aware that the board of SDTC was, at the time, chaired by someone who advised both Stephen Harper and Brian Mulroney and provided advice to Jim Flaherty. To say that this is all about Liberal insiders and that is why we are trying to hide something is just not true. The member should at least acknowledge that fact.

We have provided information, albeit redacted, just as former prime ministers and many premiers have done when providing information. At times, there is a need to have redactions. What is different here is that the government is being told by the opposition to contradict what the RCMP and the Auditor General are saying. They are pushing to get information directly so they can hand it straight over to the RCMP. Even the RCMP is questioning that tactic, yet the member opposite tries to give the false impression that we are trying to hide something.

Why will he not be honest with his constituents and tell them that the real reason documents are being held back is the concerns about the Charter of Rights and that this means something to him?



*Privilege*

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, the Liberal member loves to go back in time, so I too will go back in time and reiterate that the Minister of Environment was the in-house lobbyist for 10 years for a company that conveniently was appointed as one of the first investors on the SDTC board. That same company received \$114 million, and a director invested in it. What a coincidence it is that this insider's investment has since tripled.

If the member wants to go back in time and pick random things, why does he not look at the historical record of his colleague, the Minister of Environment, and his vested interests. It is not a coincidence that companies with a connection to the government have tripled in value. Maybe they were good investments, but when insiders are appointed to a board that can hand out money and that breaks conflict of interest rules, that is an issue.

The Liberals can continue to obfuscate all they want, but this is a matter they cannot hide from. Canadians deserve better, and they deserve to know where their \$400 million went.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will go further on the issue of the radical Minister of Environment, who was a paid lobbyist for 10 years for Cycle Capital when he received his shares. He was elected in 2019, and the year before that, he lobbied the PMO and the industry department 25 times for Cycle Capital, some of that while he was the nominated candidate for the Liberal Party. Then in 2020, while he was a member of cabinet, cabinet approved another \$750 million for the Liberal green slush fund. The claim that there were not Liberal insiders, which the hon. member on the Liberal side makes, is false.

I would like the member to comment specifically on the issue that for some mistaken reason, the Liberals think the only way a police investigation can happen is for the police to ask for documents. If someone who operates a business finds that an employee has committed a malfeasance and the Government of Canada owns the business, is it not their obligation to turn those documents over to the police? They do not have to wait for the police to discover it, do they?

• (1710)

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my Conservative colleague wholeheartedly. It is the obligation and responsibility, the fiduciary duty, of a company to do exactly that. As an entrepreneur before I was elected and as somebody who sacrificed options because I was elected and chose to serve, I put a lot of thought into how I would ensure no direct, overt conflicts of interest, which we are talking about right now, and even the perception of them.

Any reasonable Canadian looking at this right now, with the Minister of Environment having been a 10-year lobbyist for a company that had an investor appointed to a board that doled out money and who happened to dole out money to their own company, would think it just smells funny, and I am putting that lightly. My Conservative colleague went into all of the specifics, because I know he has been at the forefront of driving this, but there is a huge issue here and Canadians deserve to get to the bottom of it. The Liberal government must stop obfuscating and hand over the documents first and foremost so that we can get to the bottom of this corruption.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Madam Speaker, further on that, here is the situation that happened. The radical Minister of Environment's boss was the founder of Cycle Capital before he was elected. That person sat on the board, and her company, over its duration, received a quarter of a billion dollars, or 25% of all the money in the Liberal green slush fund. Coincidentally, that board member, who owned Cycle Capital, was shifted to the Infrastructure Bank board, and guess what the first investment was she approved as a board member at the Infrastructure Bank. It was \$170 million for the company owned by the chair of the Liberal green slush fund, Annette Verschuren.

Does the member think there is a cozy little conflict of interest, a little conspiracy of conflict of interest, between these directors when 82% of the transactions the board approved are conflicted and when one goes to another board and then featherbeds the board she just left?

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, those are blatant conflicts of interest, and I alluded to this earlier. When any auditor, never mind the Auditor General of Canada, takes a random sample and finds that 82% of it has a conflict of interest, any normal person would wonder, "What if we did a full, complete forensic audit?" That is vitally important here.

What we are seeing is a pattern of behaviour, a pattern of conflict and a pattern of insider dealing, and as a taxpayer, and on behalf of taxpayers and my constituents, many of whom are start-up owners and entrepreneurs, I know we cannot allow this to continue. Their hard-earned money should not be going to insiders. It should not be going to a government that picks winners and is only picking its friends. That is not good for our country. It is also not good for the start-up environment and the alleged green industry that the government claims to care about.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I am disappointed. The member has chosen not to make reference at all to what the RCMP and the Auditor General have said. They have expressed concerns with what our colleagues in the Conservative Party are doing in regard to the proposal of having the information gathered and then handed directly over to the RCMP in an unredacted form. They have expressed concern about that tactic.

Does the member not see that we should at least listen to what the RCMP and the Auditor General have to say on the issue? As opposed to trying to commit character assassination, why not just allow this issue, as the Speaker has recommended, to be handed over to the procedure and House affairs committee, letting us continue with other House-related business?

• (1715)

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary makes reference to the Auditor General. I think it is important to read a quote from an SDTC whistle-blower specifically referencing the Auditor General. They said:

### *Privilege*

I think the Auditor General's investigation was more of a cursory review. I don't think the goal and mandate of the Auditor General's office is to actually look into criminality, so I'm not surprised by the fact that they haven't found anything criminal. They're not looking at intent. If their investigation was focused on intent, of course they would find the criminality.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is truly a privilege for me to take part in the debate on this question of privilege today. As members know, I have been in the House since 2006, and history has been repeating itself year after year since the election of the Liberal government. Unfortunately, the scandals have been piling up under this government, and the green fund scandal is just the cherry on top to crown the past nine years. “Cherry on top” may not be the right expression, but we can only imagine how much is hidden behind all the events and all these years. I must admit that I get the impression that this government is doing a big cleanup before the next election to hide as much as possible or to destroy whatever evidence it can before any investigation can be held into just about all of their accomplishments.

This big, colossal Liberal government is not even hiding it anymore. It openly refuses to provide the RCMP with the documents it needs to investigate the undeniable corruption that no doubt allowed Liberal cronies to benefit their friends with money from the green fund, as the Auditor General found. It is really sad because the green fund was actually a good fund designated by the Department of the Environment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across Canada through technology initiatives. It would have been deeply appreciated and timely, given the challenges future generations will face over the next few decades in reducing greenhouse gases. Unfortunately, as I will demonstrate in a few minutes, this money was not necessarily used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but rather to line the pockets of Liberal Party cronies.

While Canadians are struggling, life has never been better for well-connected Liberal insiders. If a person is well connected, like the friends of the Liberal Party are, then they can apply for and get funds just like that. We are waiting to prove it, if one day we can get our hands on the documents that were requested by the House. Meanwhile, the Auditor General, Karen Hogan, was able to demonstrate problems with the financing of small and medium-sized businesses in the environmental technology sector that received money from the organization. The organization's mission is a very noble one, but that mission was perverted when the organization's budget of \$1 billion over five years was used to line some people's pockets. Let me use my favourite saying: This is truly scandalous.

Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, must remain independent and sheltered from politics in order to achieve its primary goal, which is to use scientific knowledge to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The hope is that the government will appoint competent, independent people to the board of directors, who do not necessarily own businesses in the fund's sector of activity. The least we can do is avoid placing these individuals in a conflict of interest. That is the goal, especially since these technologies will let us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions without sacrificing our lives and our country's development to do it.

In any case, we, the Conservatives, on this side of the House, believe that science and technology will be one of the main tools in our tool box for improving our environmental track record when it comes to greenhouse gas. Concrete actions need to be taken. Investing in our Canadian scientists and in useful things like reducing our greenhouse gas emissions could make a huge difference in improving the future for generations to come. However, a corruption scandal of this magnitude has undermined the mission of SDTC, with non-repayable contributions that have nothing to do with greenhouse gases.

● (1720)

For example, the Auditor General noted in her report that she was able to analyze 18 projects completed through the fund rather than each individual project. She therefore looked at a sample of 18 projects. Of those 18 projects, 12 met only half of the greenhouse gas reduction targets, contrary to what was presented when the projects were being assessed.

Was this anticipated, or was the government pushing the limit when it submitted the projects for funding? Maybe, maybe not, but for now, if we extrapolate from all these results, it means that more than 66% of the projects submitted probably would not have qualified for public funding if they had been presented with the objectives they achieved. They would not have qualified for the funding and could not have been funded. However, they did end up being funded. Because of these false premises, they were granted funding, sadly.

Overstating the effectiveness of projects has unfortunately been commonplace. In fact, it has been the rule, not the exception. When accepting applications of that nature under a program, some might fail to meet the objectives. However, since 66% of the projects submitted did not meet the objectives, there may have been some irregularities when the applications were accepted.

The government's refusal to produce these documents is without a doubt an admission of guilt. The majority of members in the House of Commons voted to force the Liberals to make the documents public. We are still wondering why they have not been released.

Our parliamentary privilege is being violated and nothing is being done about it across the way. We might say that the government is trying to save face and hide the extent of the corruption in this whole affair. It is very reminiscent of the sponsorship scandal. They tried to hide a lot of things, but thanks to the perseverance of members who were sitting in the House at the time, we ended up getting to the truth, which led to an election and the defeat of the previous Liberal government.

What we are talking about here is the fact that some individuals gave public money to their own companies through the board of directors. Unfortunately, people gave money to companies that were owned by board members or by those who had direct or indirect ties to board members. They did it once, twice, three times, and perhaps as many as 186 times. Of course, after awhile, these people wondered why they could not have some money too, since they had given money to practically everyone. Everyone took a little. That is putting private interest above public interest, which is an all-too-common Liberal practice. Tax dollars were used to help private companies that, unfortunately, did not produce any results. One also has to wonder about that.

The Auditor General was very clear: The chair of the green slush fund, who was chosen by the Prime Minister, broke the law. She was in a direct conflict of interest. That was undoubtedly one of many errors in judgment on the part of the Prime Minister.

I would like to go over the events and provide some figures for us to understand the extent of the problem. Earlier this summer, the Auditor General found that directors had awarded funding to projects that were ineligible and that involved conflicts of interest. In all, \$123 million worth of contracts were awarded inappropriately, and \$59 million went to projects that should have never received money in the first place. The organization's own conflict of interest policies were broken more than 186 times. It is completely ridiculous.

In addition, the Auditor General found that more than \$300 million in public funds had been paid out in more than 186 cases involving a potential conflict of interest. The Prime Minister's appointees were doling out money to companies that belonged to them.

• (1725)

Unfortunately, Canadians' tax dollars are being squandered yet again. The chair of the green slush fund was chosen by the Prime Minister, even though he had been warned of her conflicts of interest. True to form, the Prime Minister, did what he wanted and decided to appoint her to the position anyway.

SDTC is supposed to be an independent organization, accountable to the innovation minister. It has a duty to achieve its objectives and to fund companies that are genuinely beneficial to the environment in order to restore public confidence in our institutions as quickly as possible. Trust in our institutions has, sadly, been broken. This is really important here in the House because, in the Parliament of Canada as a whole, with all the funding we provide and allocate, we really do owe it to ourselves to be transparent.

After the forest fires that have raged across Canada in recent years, the Liberals are not taking the organization's mission seriously. We know that the organization's goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as to find technologies to prevent these greenhouse gas emissions. Enough is enough. The Prime Minister must comply with Parliament's order and table the documents pertinent to the green slush fund so that the RCMP can investigate this corruption scandal. Canadians deserve transparency. The will of the House and the will of all Canadians cannot be ignored.

### *Privilege*

This whole slush fund mechanism was set up with full knowledge of the facts. It is hard to imagine that a big board of directors failed to understand or realize the potential for conflicts of interest in their own decisions. The ministers knew about it and refused to stop their friends at SDTC from engaging in corruption. A recording by a senior official called out the Liberal government on its incompetence for inappropriately awarding contracts worth \$123 million. This was the senior official who said, on August 25, 2023, "There's a lot of sloppiness and laziness. There is some outright incompetence and, you know, the situation is just kind of untenable at this point." He reported that the crooked business going on at SDTC is "a sponsorship-level kind of giveaway".

The least we can say is that this new scandal deserves our full attention and that, once again, we are going to have to get out the magnifying glass, put our shoulder to the wheel and spend our time chasing down all the Liberals' unscrupulous dirty dealings. The House must address this new scandal as quickly as possible. That is part of our duty as legislators. It shows us once again that this Prime Minister and the members of his government fully deserve to be removed from the duties they are no longer worthy of.

I can just hear the Liberals, with a big fat smile on their faces, suggesting that the documents have already been handed over to the authorities and that the RCMP has already begun its investigation. However, the parliamentary law clerk indicated in his letter that the RCMP has not received all the documents that the House asked for and that the Department of Justice has refused to hand over its documents to the RCMP. Many documents have been redacted and others withheld. If the government does not hand over all the evidence to the police, there cannot be a full investigation. It is hard to find the truth with only half the evidence.

This whole story could easily be over if the Liberals ended the secrecy and handed over the documents to the appropriate authorities to determine once and for all whether there is culpability or not. This should not be a partisan issue. The other opposition parties in the House also voted for the motion, but the Liberals are slow to act on things and the 30-day deadline is drawing to a close, unfortunately.

As recordings that the whistle-blowers released last year showed, this controversy is one of a long series of scandals during the past nine years of Liberal incompetence. These scandals have involved both corruption and the squandering of public funds. Think of ArriveCAN, an application that should have cost \$80,000 but ended up costing \$59.5 billion. That is more than 740 times the original cost. Think of the WE Charity scandal, in which a contract to administer public funds was going to be sent to a foundation with close ties to the Prime Minister's family. When this was discovered, Parliament was prorogued.

*Privilege*

• (1730)

Let us also not forget the excellent work of the Auditor General, who showed that the Prime Minister had inappropriately awarded hundreds of millions of dollars to McKinsey. In fact, 90% of the firm's contracts, valued at \$209 million, were awarded without even following the appropriate guidelines, and 70% of those contracts were awarded non-competitively, without a call for tenders.

I could give many more examples, since the list is long, but people tend to remember things better when one follows a rule of three. In closing, according to my calculations, 58% of the green fund's seed funding, another fund, was distributed in Liberal ridings, whereas only 45% of the members here in the House are Liberals. We can therefore assume that non-Liberal ridings may not have received their fair share. There appears to be a lot of favouritism and unfairness again.

Canadians deserve a transparent, accountable government with sound judgment and integrity. Only the common-sense Conservatives will put an end to corruption and get answers for Canadians. Canadians want an election as soon as possible to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am racking my brain. I am not a House affairs historian, but could the member tell us whether, if the documents are handed over to the RCMP, this would be the first time that the House handed over documents to a third party, in other words, the first time the House served a third party?

I would like to talk about another thing. I have heard members on the other side say that we do not have to worry about privacy because we can trust the RCMP and the police. Does that mean that, from now on, search warrants are no longer needed?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, yes, we all need to trust the RCMP and the police. However, it is our duty to give them the documents so that they can complete their investigation. If they receive redacted documents, or if some documents have been withheld, how can we expect RCMP investigators to do their job? I am confident that they will do a good job. We have to do our job here and demand that the documents be turned over.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we in the NDP support the motion. Of course we want to get to the bottom of this Liberal scandal, but I know my colleague remembers what happened during the Harper years. Under Harper, the Conservatives refused any investigation into their scandals. I just want to point out that the G8 scandal involved \$1 billion. The ETS scandal cost \$400 million. The Phoenix pay system cost \$2.2 billion. Funding for the fight against terrorism involved more than \$3 billion, and we never found out what happened to that money. That is a lot of money.

It is taxpayers' money, but the Conservatives treated the public purse like their own personal bank account. There was never an investigation into all of that corruption because the Conservatives refused to allow committees to get to the bottom of it and, of course, they prevented Parliament from doing it either.

Will my colleague now admit that the Conservatives were wrong to refuse these investigations? Are they prepared to apologize to the Canadian public?

• (1735)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, my colleague threw out a lot of numbers. He seemed relatively well informed, which means there was a lot of transparency.

I invite him to ask the Library of Parliament the same questions. He will no doubt get the same answer because all the documents were submitted.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière for his excellent speech. I just want to mention that he has been here in the House since 2006. He said that, but it bears repeating. That makes him the longest-serving Conservative MP from Quebec. We can be very proud of his contribution to the debate.

My colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis was talking about the memory we need to have here in the House. The member witnessed the appalling free-for-all during the sponsorship scandal.

Could the member tell us about the parallels between what we are seeing today and the sad and awful Liberal sponsorship scandal of the early 2000s?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for pointing out my achievements here in the House.

It is true that this is very important, because, if members will recall, the Liberals used basically the same strategy in the sponsorship scandal. The money was hidden in a program, and they did not want to disclose where the money was going or what it was being used for. After looking into what was going on and asking for more transparency and for documents, we found out after the fact that the sponsorship scandal was a roundabout way of giving money back to the Liberal Party. We do not want to speculate on the same strategy, but we would like to make sure that the money in the green fund was not used to indirectly finance the Liberal Party.

I would therefore invite the Liberal Party to be as transparent as possible, hand over the documents and free itself from any speculation about its own financing.

*Privilege*

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as the member is reflecting on the past, let me get his thoughts on the Conservative anti-terrorism scandal, the Conservative Phoenix pay scandal, the Conservative G8 spending scandal, the Conservative ETS scandal, the Conservative F-35 scandal, the Conservative Senate scandal, the Conservative election scandals, as in two scandals, and why, with all of those Conservative Harper scandals, Stephen Harper never provided unredacted comments. Why is there a double standard? When that member sat with Stephen Harper, he never made those types of demands, yet today he feels we should not only make that demand but then shift it over to the RCMP, thereby blurring judicial independence.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, that list was relatively long; on the other hand, it was relatively inaccurate. The Senate scandals have all been completely cleared up. The F-35s were bought by the Liberals. It seems to me that there was another one; yes, the Phoenix payroll scandal.

It is true that the initiative was launched by the Conservative government, but it was disastrously implemented by the Liberal government. Instead of rolling it out in one department to see if the Phoenix system worked, it rolled it out across all departments on the same day. I am sorry, but that was a really stupid, amateurish decision. It is worse than a major scandal, because it cost billions of dollars and impacted all civil servants, who were afraid they would not get paid. The effects are still being felt today. The government missed the mark because of a lack of judgment.

That is what we have come to expect from the Liberals. There is no such thing as good judgment.

• (1740)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I asked questions but my colleague did not answer. He said that everything was fine, but that was not so. It was the worst government in our entire history. The most corrupt government ever was the Harper government. It was a disaster. It had no idea how to even manage finances.

As we know, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that all the treaties they gave to tax havens cost us a bundle, close to \$30 billion a year.

We can criticize the Liberals for not reversing all the bad, stupid decisions that Mr. Harper made. However, the reality is that the Conservatives were at fault. They betrayed the Canadian people.

Can my colleague admit that the Harper government was the most corrupt government in Canadian history?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I think my colleague is starting to have cognitive problems.

The Harper government is the best government Canada has ever had. That government managed to balance the budget, despite the global economic crisis of 2008. The country emerged stronger because we made better investments to get Canadians back to work. Those investments did not create inflation. Let us not forget that, under the Harper regime, interest rates gradually went down. Cana-

dians could afford to buy a house, to pay rent, to live, to purchase inexpensive food and to buy a car at a reasonable price. There was hope in Canada. We set a benchmark for the rest of the world.

Right now, Canada is a negative example because people can no longer afford to live here. The Harper years were the good years. I call them the years of living high on the hog, because I am a farmer.

[English]

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, while it is always indeed an honour and a privilege to rise in this House and address it on important matters, it is with some disappointment that we find ourselves once again in this place debating a question of privilege. I have lost count of the number of times in this Parliament and recent parliaments that this House has had to debate questions of privilege related to the actions of the Liberal government. This particular question of privilege is very serious. It relates to the government's failure to produce the documents that were required to be produced by an order of this House.

On June 10 of this year, a majority of members in this House passed a motion that ordered the production of important documents related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC. These documents were to be deposited with the law clerk, who would then have them forwarded to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The key word is "order". This was not an ask, not a request, not a "pretty please, if you have time would you be so kind as to provide this information", but an order of this House that has great constitutional and legal weight.

To talk about this we need to go back and look at the principles and privileges of this House. The House of Commons has the authority to order the production of documents and that authority comes from our Constitution. Section 18 of the British North America Act, now known as the Constitution Act, 1867, states:

The Privileges, Immunities, and Powers to be held, enjoyed, and exercised by the Senate and by the House of Commons and by the Members thereof respectively shall be such as are from Time to Time defined by Act of the Parliament of Canada...

That power includes the time-honoured ability to send for persons, papers and records.

Bosc and Gagnon, at pages 984 and 985, explain:

The Standing Orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the types of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist in hard copy or electronic format, and...they are located [with]in Canada.

Very clearly the documents requested in this case qualify under those provisions.

Bosc and Gagnon go on to state:

### *Privilege*

No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records.

I know all members have their preferred authorities, their favourite green books. Mine is *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, which, citing again Erskine May and others at paragraph 24, for those following along at home, states:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus, privilege, though part of the law of the land is, to a certain extent an exemption from the ordinary law. The distinctive mark of a privilege is its ancillary character. The privileges of Parliament are rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers".

I remind the House that it is necessary for the execution of the powers of this House that our right, as the House of Commons, is to order the production of documents. We are the grand inquest of the nation. Documents have been ordered by this House. Those documents were not provided as stipulated by that order. That is why we are here today on this question of privilege.

● (1745)

Let us take a step back and look at some of the issues involved with SDTC. It has become known as the green slush fund for obvious reasons. The Office of the Auditor General made several key observations during the audit period, which go from March 2017 to December 2023. I want to include a few key points from that report, which was tabled in the House on June 4 this year.

First, 10 projects were approved, for more than \$59 million for funding, that should have been deemed ineligible. There was \$59 million that went to ineligible recipients. The second point I want to focus on is that SDTC's conflict of interest policies were not followed 90 times. Those 90 times, the organization failed to follow its own conflict of interest policies. Third, the board approved \$58 million for projects without ensuring that they met the terms of the contribution agreement.

At the same time, the government's responses to these issues could be summarized in one word: pathetic. Of all the responses I have heard in relation to the Auditor General's report, I cannot say I have ever heard such absurd responses from the government. In fact, SDTC, in some cases, made false and outright preposterous claims. I want to highlight a few of these responses.

SDTC claimed that each project proposal goes through rigorous due diligence and evaluations that are "robust" and "highly credible". That is simply not true. If it were true, we would not be facing a multi-million dollar corruption scandal. Unless that due diligence being referred to is simply SDTC insiders looking at who on their board is getting their money, it simply did not happen.

SDTC also claimed that it was subject to an innovation, science and economic development evaluation, and that was in 2018, before this scandal happened. It was six years ago, outside of the Auditor General's audit period, and outside of the period when they were clearly ignoring the audit and the findings.

SDTC said that it does not fully agree with the Auditor General's recommendations because SDTC "delivered strong outcomes

against these objectives." Unless those objectives were to push more money into companies that the board members had financial interests in, that is simply not true.

In fact, the Auditor General herself found that 82% of the funding transactions approved of by the board of directors during the audit period were conflicted. Therefore, 82% of the time that funding was approved, there were members of the board who were benefiting from the decisions being approved.

SDTC also wrote that "written records did not fully capture the robust deliberations made," and, "SDTC is of the view that these projects met the eligibility criteria set out...but acknowledges that the [Auditor General] reached a different conclusion". Yes, the Auditor General did reach a different conclusion. She found that money was misspent. She found that there were conflicts 82% of the time.

The corrupt operators of the green slush fund are saying the Auditor General got it wrong, but any day of the week, I will put my money behind the Auditor General as opposed to the directors at the corrupt green slush fund.

SDTC also claimed that it had "clear processes for staff and directors to declare real, potential and perceived conflicts". Again, this claim completely ignores the findings of the Auditor General and, frankly, the public accounts committee, of which I am proud to be a member. We know conflicts were not declared, and even when they were declared, they either voted for their own projects or took turns voting for each other's projects in the same room without even exiting themselves from the room. The idea that there were clear processes for conflicts of interest would be laughable if it was not so concerning that these things were happening under the watch of the current government.

SDTC also claimed that it further, "strengthened its conflict of interest policies" in November 2023, well after these allegations came to light. More than that, it shows that it only cared about these problems after these terrible abuses and corruptions were found.

By November 2023, it knew the Auditor General's report was coming because that audit period was from March 2017 to December 2023. Claiming that policies have been strengthened and implying nothing further needs to be done after the corruption has already happened is simply disingenuous.

● (1750)

There is a word for this kind of arrogance: entitlement. Such entitlement comes when any organization is so used to getting vast amounts of money for their own projects that it disconnects them from the realities of honest, hard-working Canadians from coast to coast.

This matter has been raised in at least two parliamentary committees, the public accounts committee and the industry committee, both of which are doing exceptional work studying this matter. However, there is still a lot we do not know about SDTC and the green slush fund.

What we have learned so far through the industry and public accounts committees is truly alarming. Those of us on the opposition benches are determined to find out the full story; to ensure that, we need to make sure that the appropriate authorities are made aware of the documents in question.

Interestingly, it is often cited that this is not a new entity. Indeed, SDTC was created in 2001; it has been in existence for over 20 years. However, the problems did not occur until it came under the authority of the Liberal government. In fact, in an audit in 2017, no major concerns were raised. The conflict of interest culture only emerged after board members were hand-picked and appointed by the current Liberal government and then minister Navdeep Bains. He, I might add, is appearing at the public accounts committee tomorrow.

What is more is that the most concerning of these appointments was in 2019, when Annette Verschuren was appointed as chair, despite clear conflicts of interest on this file. Those warnings turned out to be warranted; this past July, the Ethics Commissioner found that the former chair had violated the Conflict of Interest Act with her participation in decisions to benefit organizations that she herself had a financial interest in. It is not me saying that; our Ethics Commissioner noted that she had violated the Conflict of Interest Act.

We also found out through testimony at committee that former assistant deputy minister Andrew Noseworthy was responsible for keeping watch over SDTC but apparently failed to do so. On December 11 of last year, he appeared at the industry committee and said, "To my knowledge, I am not aware of any decisions to allocate funds to projects related to board members where they did not recuse themselves."

However, the Auditor General's report released just two months later clearly informed us that the system was filled with conflicts of interest; we can go back to that 82% number. ADM Noseworthy's claim that there was no awareness of these conflicts of interest is clearly at odds with the actual facts found in the case by the Auditor General. Either he told an untruth to the committee or he was willfully blind to the corruption that was going on in the institution for which he was responsible.

We also know that, if there was any semblance of good governance, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology would have or should have been notified of these lapses in conflicts of interest rules and of the fact that accountability was absent in this matter.

### *Privilege*

What is more, we found out in shocking testimony at the public accounts committee that at least one Liberal MP was informed of these allegations more than two years ago. The Liberal member of Parliament for Calgary Skyview was informed of these decisions, but perhaps his response to the matter got lost in the mail.

When the whistle-blower known to the committee as Witness 1 appeared at the public accounts committee last month, they stated that they had informed the Liberal member of Parliament for Calgary Skyview in May 2022. The whistle-blower stated that the Liberal Member "assured me that he took this situation seriously and guaranteed that he would facilitate contact with the appropriate people in the federal government and the Auditor General's office." However, the Liberal member was not true to his word and subsequently refused to engage.

We also know that Liberal-friendly directors were appointed to the board. A key example of this is long-time Liberal operative Stephen Kukucha, who was appointed to the board in February 2021. This is after he had a long-time career as a Liberal donor, a ministerial staffer in a Liberal government, a regional organizer for the Liberal Party of Canada and a secretary for the 2016 Liberal convention.

● (1755)

Interestingly, shortly after the Prime Minister came into office, that Liberal insider became a lobbyist and advocated for certain energy and transportation businesses. However, he was still appointed to the board of the SDTC, the green slush fund, which is exactly where the companies he had a personal financial interest in could receive financial contributions from the very same government.

Furthermore, as my good friend and colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, has very ably explained, we also know that the current Liberal minister of environment has had an interest in a venture capital firm called Cycle Capital, which also received funding from the green slush fund.

Finally, I have learned from a current member of the new board that since the scandal broke, none of the money, not one penny nor one dollar that was wrongfully spent, has been recovered. Despite the fact that 82% of decisions were made by conflicted board members, not a dollar has been recouped for Canadian taxpayers. This is but one more reason why the production order for the papers must be fulfilled, as was ordered by a majority of the House.

Let us refresh what we are looking for. As the grand inquest of the nation, this is not only a matter of parliamentary privilege for the House but also a moral obligation to Canadians. In order to meet that obligation, the documents must be fully provided to the parliamentary law clerk and thereby sent to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

*Privilege*

I sit on the public accounts committee, which is still waiting to receive a number of documents. This is separate in part from the motion before us. We do not yet have the communications that would indicate if or when the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry was informed that the money was going out based on the decisions of conflicted board members. We do not yet have contribution and funding agreements showing the requirements and obligations of recipients. We do not have the conflict of interest declarations of board members and former board members.

When we put this all together, simply put, we do not have the transparency required, the oversight needed and the accountability required and expected of us as members of the House.

As I mentioned at the outset, this is not the first question of privilege we have dealt with in recent times, but it seems like we are doing this time and time again. Earlier this year, on yet another privilege debate on yet another scandal, the ArriveCAN scandal, I stated that this is a slow erosion of rights and privileges, and that it is not a small matter. It is an absolute threat to parliamentary democracy.

We saw this in the previous Parliament with the Winnipeg lab scandal, which caused tremendous hardship for the scandal-plagued Liberal government. In fact in that case, the then president of the Public Health Agency of Canada was called to the bar to be admonished for failing or, perhaps more accurately, refusing, to provide documents that had been ordered to be provided to the House. In that case, the Liberal government itself took the former Speaker of the House to court to avoid accountability.

On the same topic of withholding documents, just earlier this month, the Speaker ruled that there was another prima facie question of privilege in which the business partner of the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre failed to disclose documents he had been ordered to provide. His business partner is disregarding an order of Parliament, and we will certainly deal with that question of privilege once this one has been dealt with.

The issue before us is not simply a question of niceties about respecting parliamentary privilege; it goes to the heart of our democracy. The scandal is about a tremendous waste of money, where hard-earned taxpayer dollars were used by the board of SDTC to benefit government insiders. There need to be clear and accountable records for Canadians to know who got rich and who is at fault.

We must pass the motion. What is more, and what is equally important, is that the documents must be turned over to the parliamentary law clerk as required by the order of the House.

• (1800)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there has been accountability and there has also been transparency on the issue. The simple truth of the matter is that since it was found out, we have seen independent investigations internally, two of them; we have seen the Auditor General conduct investigations; we have seen hours and hours at the standing committee; we have seen a replacement of the board; and we have seen the stopping of funding of new monies going in. These are all actions

as a result of the government truly caring about what is taking place.

Now, the Conservatives have chosen to make a political game out of this, because they want to tie the word “corruption” to it. Hindsight is wonderful, but the chair of the board was an actual adviser to Brian Mulroney, Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty, and we appointed her as the chair of the organization. With hindsight, yes, that was a mistake.

My question to the member is: Why do we need to disregard the concerns from the RCMP and the Auditor General when they say that the Conservative tactic today causes a great deal of concern?

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, the fact is, the member said that the government is truly caring about what happened here. Well, no, the Liberals only care about the fact that they got caught. All of this only happened after these allegations came to light through the Auditor General's report, and through the work of my good friend and colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, who actually put in the hard work to get to the bottom of some of the allegations in this scandal.

However, we are not done yet. We still do not have all the details of what happened in these cases. We have only seen 82% of the conflicted cases that the Auditor General examined. We do not know the extent of that applied to the more than 400-plus decisions that were made outside that time period. The Auditor General was only able to look at a sampling of those cases. So, we know about 82% of those cases, but there could be much more. There is so much work left to be done.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I share many of my colleague's concerns, including about the government's accountability in a case like this. There are actions that need to be taken and changes that need to be made.

However, there is something that worries me about the Conservatives' attitude in this debate. I wonder what will happen afterward. If the Conservatives form the next government, will they commit to reinvesting the money in a new green fund for innovation and sustainable development in order to promote and maximize the energy transition?

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his good question.

I will be very clear. We will not give the money to government cronies. We will make sure that every dollar that the government spends is given to organizations that do important work, not to organizations that have ties to the government. We will be very clear on that.



Let us not forget that the first bill the Conservative government introduced in 2006 was on federal accountability. It is very important that we be very clear. The next Conservative government will be accountable to all Canadians.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, a June 2024 national security and intelligence committee report reveals foreign interference in the Conservative leadership race. It identified China and India. We know that Erin O'Toole met with lawyers to talk about how he was taken out as leader of the Conservative Party partially through foreign interference.

I am asking my hon. colleague this question because, today, the man who took his place, who may have been involved with foreign interference, made a shocking statement to the world that he was encouraging a strike on Iran by Netanyahu to attack a nuclear facility. We see the irresponsible nature of this guy, who has never had a job outside of working in a Dairy Queen, yet is calling for a strike on a potential nuclear facility. He does not even have security clearance. Is it that he cannot get security clearance or is he not allowed to have security clearance? How is it possible that we could have a man who says he is going to be leader of a country calling for a strike on a nuclear facility and he does not even know what the nuclear and security implications are because he cannot get the clearance?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am not quite sure the question goes with the privilege motion, but I will allow the hon. member for Perth-Wellington to respond if he so wishes.

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I would just say, first and foremost, that this is complete and utter nonsense from the member for Timmins—James Bay. Let us be very clear. As a minister of the Crown, the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition is a privy councillor. He is a privy councillor for life, with all the responsibilities that come with that. He has been serving in the House and serving with distinction. The member would know well the rights and the privileges that come with that.

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

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I hear a bit of an echo from way down in the far end, but those are the facts. The member is a member of the Privy Council, which comes with the absolute highest level of secrecy. That is an oath that is taken when they are sworn in to His Majesty's Privy Council.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It was not just at the other end of the room that I heard some individuals speaking, so I would ask that members please wait until the appropriate time before speak.

Continuing with questions and comments, we have the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

● (1810)

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am going to make a brief comment on the Liberal member for Winnipeg North's comment earlier, where he finally acknowledged, in hindsight, that Annette Verschuren should not have been appointed chair of the Liberal green slush fund. I will

### *Privilege*

give that member in the House another newsflash. The former Liberal minister Bains was told three times by the CEO of the Liberal green slush fund not to hire her because of her conflict of interest. The former PMO staffer who worked in communications in the green slush fund told the former minister's office and the PMO not to hire her because of her conflict of interest. She is the only chair in the history of the green slush fund to have a conflict.

Does the House know what former minister Bains said back to the CEO? He said to not worry, that he would manage the conflict. I guess they managed the conflict well, as they managed \$400 million out of taxpayer money. I would like the member to comment about the claim or the acknowledgement that they made the wrong choice yet again.

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets makes a great point. Prior to this, there were no members of the board who would be conflicted. Not only did they appoint board members who were conflicted, they appointed the chair herself, who was highly conflicted and who was not only caught making decisions of a conflicted nature, where she was approving funds, but also further found to have violated the Conflict of Interest Act by the Ethics Commissioner.

This is one of the reasons why we are here today and one of the reasons why the Auditor General's report is so valuable and so important. It found that this was happening right under the nose of the Liberal government, under the nose of the Liberal ministers, because they themselves knew the conflicts existed.

They knew that this was a possibility, they knew that this was a problem, yet they still appointed these individuals to their roles as board members at SDTC.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the member did not make reference to the fact that the chair was an adviser to Brian Mulroney, Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty. In the future, does he think we should discard any of those types of advisers?

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, simply put, we will disregard candidates who have clear and tangential conflicts of interest. We will not appoint people to decision-making bodies where they will be in a conflict of approving funds for their own businesses.

That is where these Liberals failed. They appointed individuals to decision-making positions at SDTC knowing full well, in advance, that they were making decisions that would benefit themselves directly. The claim that there are so few people in this sector, so they could not find anyone, is rubbish. There are tons of people in this country who would receive high praise for their ethics and integrity and serve on these boards to make decisions that are impartial and not with conflicts of interest.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today as the representative for the good people of North Okanagan—Shuswap. I will be speaking on the issue of the question of privilege raised by my colleague the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

### *Privilege*

For those Canadians who may still be unclear as to why we are debating a point of privilege to this extent, I will give a condensed history of the situation. This may be the first time people are seeing this back home or in other parts of the country, so they deserve to be brought up to speed on why Parliament has ground to a halt here.

I will quote my hon. colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets for the initial information, because he has been diligently bringing up the breaches of interest on this file:

There is a foundation set up in 2001 called Sustainable Development Technology Canada, with the purpose of providing taxpayer financial assistance to green technology companies before they are commercialized. Since the government was elected, the foundation has received a billion dollars of taxpayer money. The result of probing by parliamentary committees is that we found that in 82% of the funding transactions approved by the board of directors during a five-year sample period that the Auditor General looked at, 82% of those transactions were conflicted.

After seeing the Auditor General's report and the seemingly blatant disregard of conflict of interest guidelines, opposition members called for the release of the documents pertaining to the Liberal green slush fund, as it has come to be known.

On June 16 this year, my colleague the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle rose on a question of privilege following notice under Standing Order 48 concerning the failure of government to comply with the order the House adopted on Monday, June 10. A majority of the House voted that day, June 16, to compel the government to produce a series of unredacted records concerning Sustainable Development Technology Canada, now known as the green slush fund, a body engulfed in one of the worst Liberal scandals in recent years.

On September 26, just last week, the hon. Speaker presented his ruling on the question of privilege raised by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I will quote only a portion of the Speaker's ruling because it is quite lengthy:

The procedural precedents and authorities are abundantly clear. The House has the undoubted right to order the production of any and all documents from any entity or individual it deems necessary to carry out its duties. Moreover, these powers are a settled matter, at least as far as the House is concerned. They have been confirmed and reconfirmed by my immediate predecessors, as well as those more distantly removed.

The Speaker later went on to say, "The Chair cannot come to any other conclusion but to find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established."

Here we are today, one week later, debating a motion once again and calling on the government to produce the documents it has thus far refused to provide to the House. One has to wonder what is so damaging in these documents that the government would put all other legislative processes aside in an attempt to cover up what those documents contain.

How bad can it possibly be? Can it be worse than the SNC-Lavalin scandal that saw the same government embarrassed for its corruption and saw the first female indigenous minister of justice and attorney general kicked out of the Prime Minister's cabinet and caucus because she chose to stand up for the truth?

• (1815)

First, Canadians, my colleagues and I suspect that what is in the documents is extremely damning to the corrupt government and its Prime Minister, so bad that they will go to such great lengths to avoid producing the documents demanded by members of the House.

Parliamentarians, at least on this side of the House, take our role very seriously. Members of His Majesty's loyal opposition have a job to do, and that is to hold the government of the day accountable. Lord knows, that is a formidable task these days with a government that has been in power for nine years and is desperately trying to cling to that power.

I recall the 2015 campaign by the Prime Minister, which was during my first campaign in my first election. The Prime Minister made statements about sunlight being the best disinfectant, and he said that his government was going to be so transparent. Well, something has happened to those sunny days, and there are storm clouds brewing all over the out-of-touch, out-of-time Prime Minister and his government. On the aspect of transparency, what has truly become transparent is the Liberal government's clear and penchant leaning to look after its Liberal friends and ignore the rest of Canadians.

When we look at the hundreds of millions of dollars that the Auditor General has identified as having been spent or allocated inappropriately, we have to wonder how much good could have been done with those dollars. How many struggling Canadians would have been better off had the green slush fund dollars been properly accounted for and gone to deserving causes instead of to entitled Liberal friends?

When I am home in the North Okanagan—Shuswap, I hear from seniors who are struggling to get by on their minimal pensions because of the increased cost of living, including food, rents that have doubled and fuel and energy costs beyond what they can afford because of the government's penchant for its carbon tax that is driving up the cost of everything.

These Canadians are the ones hurting the most, yet the Prime Minister and his appointees had no problem letting a billion dollars, or a major portion of it, get blown away unchecked to insiders in conflicts of interest. These are the Canadians who deserve to know that justice can be served for them by holding the Prime Minister and his appointees accountable. These are Canadians like the one in five who skipped or reduced the size of at least one meal because they could not afford groceries; that rate is 45% among single parents. These are Canadians like the one in five parents who ate less so their children or another family member could eat; that rate is 44% among single parents.

I learned that in Vernon, one in 23 families has relied on a food bank in the last 12 months, and one in 13 kids depended on the food bank last year. These numbers are troubling. When I see a government this wasteful leaving Canadians behind, with seniors and children unable to eat, it is despicable.

*Privilege*

● (1820)

Many of the food bank users in Vernon are hard-working, middle-class families struggling to put food on the table. I bring this to the current debate, because those Canadians have an expectation that we hold this government accountable through the actions of the members in this chamber, accountable for the taxpayer dollars those Canadians pay and this government continues to waste.

Many of those Canadians have to work two jobs and still rely on the food bank to feed their families. They deserve to know how this Prime Minister has let hundreds of millions of dollars be given to privileged insiders he appointed, while at the same time families, seniors and hard-working Canadians cannot afford food for their tables.

I spoke of the situation in Vernon and the North Okanagan, but the same situation is playing out across that riding and across Canada, with homelessness and tent cities popping up faster than a Liberal can spew talking points. We have heard members from across Canada speak of the rise in food bank use and the rise in homelessness, all while this PM and his insiders have funnelled millions of dollars to themselves or their close friends, leaving honest Canadians to go without.

I will shift topics a bit here to emphasize some of the points made by the member for South Shore—St. Margarets regarding some of the objections by the government to providing these documents.

If I was the owner or manager of a company and became aware of alleged criminal activity within that company, I would be expected to turn over evidence to the police to have it investigated. In fact, I would find it an obligation to point out wrongdoing, criminality and waste. There is no reason we would not provide the documents of evidence to enforcement agencies and investigative teams, except for one possible reason. That reason would be if the body providing the evidence was also guilty in the activity.

This House and its members should be held accountable in the same way, as managers of the business of government. We, through the motion to provide the documents and the question of privilege we are debating today, are working to do just that: to report alleged wrongdoing and conflict of interest, so that the proper authorities can investigate and, if needed, prosecute. We, through the motion to provide these documents, are doing what we are supposed to do: exposing the activities that have allowed \$390 million to go to Liberal insiders.

As I have noted, there is only one reason apparent for this Prime Minister and his appointees to keep these documents hidden from the sunlight that he espoused to be the best disinfectant. It is also so intriguing that a government, or maybe it is just the Prime Minister and a few insiders, would go to such extreme measures to keep the truth from seeing the light of day. They have so far been willing to set aside all other legislative debate in this chamber to keep something hidden. We can only surmise what that may be, but from what we have seen in the Auditor General's report, it does not look good: numerous cases of conflict of interest; \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that on occasion could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or the development of green technology.

● (1825)

The Speaker may already see, but Canadians may not, that there is a way to end the impasse we are now at. All it would take is for the Prime Minister to release these documents as the House has directed. I say “directed”, not asked or requested. It was a clear direction, an order from the House and the members of this chamber, for the Prime Minister and his government to produce these documents. It was not a request from one party. It was a motion that the majority of the House voted to support.

The motion that Parliament adopted also did not say the documents could be redacted. Therefore, government could not pick and choose which portions to produce. It did not give permission for the Prime Minister or the PCO to decide which parts the House would see and which parts it would not. It would be highly inappropriate for a potentially guilty party to be given the leeway to remove or redact portions that could be damaging to their reputation.

Speaking of reputations, the government continues to build on its reputation of being untrustworthy when it comes to campaign promises, election promises and fake commitments. Now the corruption runs even deeper, and the government and the Prime Minister are refusing the will of Parliament. We saw how the government previously provided documents that were so redacted, entire pages were completely blacked out; not a written word was to be found. It must have gone through volumes of printer toner and ink just to keep parliamentarians and Canadians from seeing its dark secrets.

As I mentioned earlier, parliamentarians do not take their jobs lightly or without consideration for the impacts on Canadians, that is, most parliamentarians with nothing to hide. The Prime Minister and his insiders are not supreme rulers. They are servants of the people of Canada, not the other way around. That is why we, as a majority of Parliament, adopted the motion to bring to light the documents that may show whether the Prime Minister has served the people or whether it is the other way around, and he has made taxpayer dollars serve him and his appointees.

We do not take lightly the demand for production of documents. We will also not take it lightly when a Prime Minister and his government ignore an order of Parliament, nor should Canadians. All 338 members, as duly elected members of the ridings we represent, are here as the voices of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. If the Prime Minister ignores the will of Parliament, he ignores the will of Canadians.

*Privilege*

Where would we expect the leader of a country to ignore the will of the people? I suggest the only places where that would occur is in dictatorship countries, the types of countries that the Prime Minister has said he has a liking for or an admiration of. Dictatorships are where the leader and government have the people serve them. That is not the Canada we knew before the current Prime Minister and government, and it is not the Canada we want to see in the future.

One thing I learned before I entered the political arena is that responsibility cannot be passed on to someone else. In early media training, I learned that, when we make a mistake, it is best to fess up, own up, dress up and admit it.

• (1830)

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the Canadian Police Association and said, “All of my proposals are constitutional. We will make them constitutional, using whatever tools the Constitution allows me to use to make them constitutional. I think you know exactly what I mean.” He was talking about the notwithstanding clause. We have seen Conservative provincial governments override, using the notwithstanding clause, the rights of workers and the rights of minorities. We hear the RCMP saying they have severe charter concerns about this production order.

Could the hon. colleague speak about the RCMP's charter concerns about this production order?

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, here we go again, the Liberals are trying to deflect and distract. We are here debating a question of privilege because the government, the Prime Minister, has failed to follow the will of Parliament. As I spoke about in my speech, the only place that happens is in dictatorships. The last I checked, Canada was not a dictatorship. We are all elected to serve the people who elected us, not the other way around.

• (1835)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member talked about the challenges Canadians are facing day in and day out, yet we know that Conservatives voted against dental care, they voted against pharmacare, they voted against investments in public housing, and they have not supported our push for tax fairness and calling on greedy corporations to pay their fair share, yet they claim to stand up for Canadians who are suffering.

Why do the Conservatives continue to pretend they stand up for everyday Canadians and vote against them every chance they get?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before I allow the hon. member the time to respond, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets has a point of order.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Madam Speaker, we are debating the production of documents ordered by the Speaker, right now, and the obstruction of the government in providing those. I did not hear any of that referenced in that member's question, so I would ask for relevance.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, the hon. member is fully aware that, during debates, there is some latitude. I did raise this a while ago, as well, but I do want to remind members that the question should be relevant to the question of privilege before the House. I appreciate the hon. member bringing it forward.

I will allow the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap to respond, if he so wishes.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, I will take the question from the NDP member, even though it was not on the question of privilege, and show how it really relates to the question of privilege, a different question of privilege. We are here for Canadians, the Canadians who are suffering under the increasing carbon tax, the increasing taxation and the rising inflation caused by the Liberal-NDP government. We have a Prime Minister and his insiders who are using their privilege to decide where taxpayer money goes instead of going back to the Canadians who really deserve it.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for his intervention. As a fellow British Columbian, it is always good to see someone from B.C. in this chamber. The question is simple. The government says that there are charter issues around privacy with giving the RCMP documents that they have withheld from this production order that was voted on and passed by the House of Commons. I think the RCMP is a fine organization. If we go to its website, it actually falls under the Privacy Act.

Does the member of Parliament for North Okanagan—Shuswap believe the RCMP is perfectly capable of handling privacy concerns as it carries out its functions to make sure that we have a strong and safe Canada?

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, the question was: do I trust the RCMP with the privacy concerns around this issue? Absolutely. I have family members who served, I have a lot of friends, gotten to know a lot of people, and there have been members in the House who have served in the RCMP. I want to thank them at this time for their service.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a great day in this place when Conservatives are speaking to the government's fiscal accountability. I just wish they had done that when it came to their own government.

At the time of Stephen Harper, there were scandals galore and we saw the Conservatives shut down investigative proceedings into these issues all the time. The New Democrats, on the other hand, believe in financial accountability and in ensuring that we have strong trust in our public institutions. The Conservatives seem to only care about financial accountability if it means scoring political points.

If the Conservatives were to form government, would they keep the same appetite for fiscal accountability, unlike during the time that Harper was prime minister?

• (1840)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Griesbach for that question on fiscal accountability.

My recollection is that the last NDP leader who talked about fiscal accountability is no longer around. The party basically turfed him because he talked about balancing the budget. Since then, the New Democratic Party has sided with a Liberal government with out-of-control spending to form an NDP-Liberal coalition that has spent more money and created more debt than all other governments in Canada combined.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap gave an insightful speech. As he was a businessman before he entered this place, he has great insight into what happens when there are issues with an employee who absconds with funds.

The Auditor General only did a selective audit of 226 of 420 transactions in the audit period, just half the sample, and found 82% were conflicted. Do you think the government is refusing to release these documents because it does not want the rest of the documents out there because of what they will reveal about Liberal corruption?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member is not asking me that question. He should address his questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap may provide a brief answer. We are out of time, but I will allow him to respond.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to that.

As a former business owner, I never had the privilege or opportunity to be audited, but I have talked to many businesses that have been audited by the Government of Canada, by the CRA. If it found that 40% or 50% of transactions were questionable, it would not stop there. It would go after every last individual transaction to make sure it found every last tax dollar it could take from a business and turn it over to the government. Why is that not happening here?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Having reached the expiry of the time provided for today's debate, the House will resume consideration of the privilege motion at the next sitting of the House.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### FINANCE

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a late show again tonight and it is predicated on a question I asked back in May after the government's budget on the accumulating deficits it has drawn on this country. Parliamentary secretaries for the government at that time told me that there was no problem

### Adjournment Proceedings

as Canada was still very highly rated in the world with the best fiscal record.

Let us address some of that in this question here. Canada now has a growth rate of about 1.2%. That is 1.2% per year, according to international bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund, which is not exactly stellar considering that the OECD itself is about 3.8% a year. We have to do better in this country.

However, more than that, if we really look at these numbers, Canada has a huge productivity problem, such a productivity problem vis-à-vis the United States, our main trading partner, that between 2022 and 2023, the U.S. economy GDP per capita actually went up by 3.6%, whereas in Canada our GDP per capita went down by over 5%. How did that happen? That happened because of bad economic policies that, frankly, punish successful companies across Canada.

Also, we still grow our GDP, but we have not grown our GDP per capita because we have 2.4 million new Canadians. If we look at GDP per capita, minus 5% plus, that would mean we are actually in a recession. Did we avoid a recession by saying there is a whole bunch more people and, of course, people mean spending and spending means GDP? It is the nature of what the economy is. That is not the way to run an economy.

Our economy is falling down as far as our productivity goes, as far as the value add that we earn as a country. Now, this is interesting because 10 years ago, in 2013, looking at our productivity in Canada vis-à-vis the United States, Canada's GDP per capita at that point was about 98% of the U.S.'s GDP per capita. What is it now? It is 66% per capita, so it has fallen down by almost a third vis-à-vis our main trading partner. That is a disastrous decade that the Liberal government has foisted upon this country.

However, looking forward, which is the most important thing, we have to look at how this country reverts back to being a productive economy and how we actually get back to a standing in the world where we are once again a world leader.

Ray Dalio is a fund manager, a very important hedge manager in the United States, who is well regarded as far as his views on income equality and its importance in the economy. He looked at Canada in a realm of 35 countries and assessed us at number 26 out of 35, as far as our growth over the next 10 years goes. That was because of all kinds of issues, including the lack of education funding and the lack of ability to actually grow the country, but primarily the excessive debt we have built into the economy. He looked at Canada's 1.2% growth per year over the next 10 years. The top, of course, is India at 6.3% annual growth. The nine countries below Canada are all difficult European countries. We know that Europe's economy is in the sewer and is not going to emerge for quite a while because of bad energy policies.

I am going to ask the government this again: When is it going to address the stress it has caused in the financial markets and actually stop spending so much? The government has a spending problem and needs to get a hold of it to address inflation before it punishes Canadians even more than it already has.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1845)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I did not have an opportunity to respond to any questions during question period today, because the Conservatives have no economic questions.

I am so grateful to the member for Calgary Centre for his question tonight because in fact the Bank of Canada is leading the G7 in interest rate cuts. Canada was the first G7 country to lower interest rates for the very first time. We were also the first country among all of the G7 peers to cut interest rates for the second time, and yes, we were the first G7 country to cut interest rates for the third time.

I will tell the House why this is good news for Canadians. It is helping business owners, those who have loans and those who do not. It is helping Canadians who have a mortgage coming up for renewal, and it is helping people looking to buy a very first home.

What else is helping Canadians buy a first home? It is the reforms that our government just announced. For example, we are expanding eligibility for 30-year mortgage amortization to all first-time homebuyers and also, importantly, to all buyers of new builds. This will help reduce the cost of monthly mortgage payments and help more Canadians buy a home.

What else is helping Canadians buy a first home? It is the first home savings account that we introduced to allow prospective homebuyers to save up to \$40,000 completely tax-free in order to put a down payment towards their first home. In fact, 750,000 Canadians have already taken advantage of the program and opened their account.

What else is helping Canadians? For 19 consecutive months, wage growth has outpaced inflation, which means that even taking into account global inflation and even taking into account affordability pressures, Canadians are still better off today than they were five years ago. They are taking home larger paycheques, even taking into account inflation.

Talking about inflation, I must tell Canadians the truth: Inflation is down to just 2%. The fact that my Conservative colleague is bringing up a question he posed last May shows that the Conservatives are not following the inflation numbers. Inflation is exactly at the target rate that the Bank of Canada had set for itself.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

The member opposite seems concerned about inflation, but I would remind him that it was 2% in August, which is right in the middle of the Bank of Canada's inflation target range. Indeed, inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target range all year.

Moreover, wages have outpaced inflation for 19 consecutive months, meaning that Canadian workers are now receiving higher paycheques on average than they were before the pandemic. That is even with taking inflation into account.

Experts also predict that Canada's GDP will grow the fastest among all our G7 peers in 2025. This shows that the Canadian

economy is strong and resilient, and it shows that the economic plan we have put in place is fiscally responsible.

While the Conservatives continue to call for cuts to the supports Canadians depend on, our plan will allow the next generation to realize the dream of buying their first home.

On our side of the House, on the Liberal government side, we know that Canada is stronger when everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Madam Speaker, Canada has dropped its interest rate. The Bank of Canada has dropped it three times in a row now, and Canada has led the world because Canada's economy is leading the world in going down. Of course, we are entering an absolute recession, and not just a GDP-per-capita recession. The recession is on the horizon. I hope it does not happen. Nevertheless, something is on the horizon here: an economy that has stalled and has been stalled for a long time. We can take a look at the 1.2% growth, which is not the type of growth this country should be going through.

Here is the issue. Canadian government debt now is 107% of GDP, which the parliamentary secretary will refute because she is monkeying around with the numbers. In addition, Canadian debt per capita, household debt, is 132% per capita. We have a debt problem in Canada. It is going to land on the backs of Canadians one way or another. Will the government please address this and stop loading more debt onto the backs of Canadians?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Madam speaker, unfortunately my Conservative colleague seems to be cheering on the idea of a recession, which would be bad news for Canadians.

In fact, as I have explained, Canada is projected to have the highest growth rate of our G7 peers in 2025, which is just next year. I would also note that the Conservatives' desperation for bad economic news is not working very well for them, because Canadians understand that they are in fact in a strong economy and are seeing their wages increase.

I would like to correct the member, who mentioned yesterday, I believe, that the Conservatives are enjoying making a comparison to Alabama's GDP. Canada's GDP is \$2.138 trillion. Alabama's is \$242 billion. Therefore if anybody is monkeying around with the numbers, it is my colleague from Calgary Centre.

I do wish to end simply by stating that our government will continue to fight for vulnerable Canadians while maintaining a fiscally responsible frame.

PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Madam Speaker, inaction is a choice. The Liberal government's intentional decision to do nothing and allow Samidoun to not only continue to operate on Canadian soil but enjoy tax exemptions on its income as a federally registered non-profit is reprehensible.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Since my initial question to the government on September 20, calling for it to take action to ban Samidoun, arrest leader Khaled Barakat for inciting violence and hatred, and list Samidoun as the terrorist organization that it is, October 7 has passed. On that sombre day, when our Jewish brothers and sisters were grieving the most heinous, horrific and deadly attack on Jews since the Holocaust, what did Samidoun do? It celebrated.

It put up posters for a rally in my city of Toronto under a headline of “Long live October 7”. In Vancouver, it glorified terrorism by literally chanting, “we are Hamas and we are Hezbollah”; these are literal terrorist groups. It also desecrated our Canadian national flag by lighting it on fire. When is enough, enough?

This terrorist-affiliated, terrorist-supporting organization does not even bother to hide it anymore. Before, it would at least pretend to not hate Jews and just claim it was all about anti-Zionism. It just hated Zionists, which, unfortunately, we know is code for Jews. However, every incident of hatred left intentionally unanswered by the government has emboldened the organization.

On October 7, in addition to celebrating literal terrorist groups, Samidoun chanted, “Death to Canada. Death to the United States. And death to Israel.” The people at Samidoun have shown us who they are, and one of the things they have shown us is not only that they hate Jews, but they hate Canada and Canadians.

Why does the government make the choice to allow them to turn Canada into their base of operations to promote terrorism and hatred? Inaction is a choice, and the intentional decision to allow these blatant acts of hatred and incitement of violence is a choice by the Liberal government that puts Canadians in danger. What will it take for the government to stop choosing to allow this to continue?

Being a doormat is not a policy, and the government's tepid condemnation of hate on our soil, with claims of “this is not who we are” or “hate has no place in Canada”, is worthless, when it, with all the resources and authority available to it as a G7 national government, does nothing.

I am not even calling for Canada to be the first to take action. Germany has banned Samidoun, and Khaled Barakat is banned from the entire European Union of 27 countries. Nearly a whole fricking continent will not allow this terrorist supporter onto its soil, yet he is free to spew hatred here in Canada. What am I missing? Is Khaled Barakat a Liberal super donor? Is he a member of the Laurier Club? Is he about to be appointed a board member of SDTC, the Liberal government's green slush fund?

Instead of slushing around, the government should be flushing this hateful organization. My question to the parliamentary secretary is simple: Will it ban Samidoun, yes or no?

• (1855)

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York has raised some concerns around Samidoun, so I will take this opportunity to state that the Government of Canada is deeply concerned by the issue of hate against Jewish communities. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or hate in any form is unacceptable.

Hate propaganda and hate crimes are taken very seriously by all orders of government in Canada. The federal government, heads of police services, and provincial and territorial partners have all been meeting regularly to discuss policing collaboration and the best way to ensure safety and security for communities during these challenging times. As a government, we encourage all those affected by hate propaganda to contact their local law enforcement, as well as their local elected officials, should they have any safety concerns revolving around hate speech or actions in a community.

We have taken several actions to combat anti-Semitism and hate in Canada. In November 2023, we appointed the second special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting anti-Semitism. In addition, we recently appointed the first special adviser on Jewish community relations and anti-Semitism. We also renewed Canada's anti-racism strategy to continue the fight against racism, and we introduced Canada's first-ever action plan on combatting hate. In budget 2024, we proposed \$273.6 million over six years, starting this year, with \$29.3 million ongoing to advance this action plan. The funding will support community outreach and law enforcement reform, tackle the rise in hate crimes, enhance community safety and security, counter radicalization and increase support for victims.

With regard to designating an organization as a terrorist entity, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety reminded the House today, the minister has already referred the listing of Samidoun to our national security experts and asked for an emergency and urgent review. As my hon. colleague knows, the listing process is iterative. The environment has changed since October 2023, and the public safety department and portfolio agencies continue to monitor and assess national security threats against Canada and Canadians constantly.

I want to be clear: The Government of Canada takes any and all allegations of criminal activity, terrorism or violent extremism in Canada extremely seriously, and we have a number of tools available to address them. They include conducting investigations with a view to laying charges under the Criminal Code, and when applicable, using peace bonds, no-fly listings, the revocation of passports and terrorist listings.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Whether to list or delist an entity under the Criminal Code is determined as a result of a rigorous process that is based on evidence, intelligence and the law. It involves cross-government consultations, used to ascertain whether an entity meets the threshold for listing as set out in the Criminal Code. I cannot comment on the process of listing a specific organization, but I can assure the member that the Government of Canada is taking the necessary actions to keep Canadians safe from violent extremism and terrorism. We will continue to work with all our partners to counter national security threats and to uphold democracy. This government stands firm in actions to protect Canadians and its belief that it is wrong to direct hatred, violence and intolerance towards those of diverse faiths and social groups. These acts will not be tolerated in Canada. We can build a better future together.

● (1900)

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, that response was reprehensible, with more empty words and platitudes. I would say that it was a joke, but this is no laughing matter; it is an issue of safety for Canadians. How seriously does the government take something if it does literally nothing?

Canadians do not need another action plan; they need action. The Liberals are boasting about another review when this organization has talked about how they have links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, another terror organization on Canada's designated terror list. I do not want a list of stuff that the government can do but has not done.

When will the government take action? More importantly, if something happens, will the government take responsibility for its inaction?

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada is firm in its stand against hate and against terrorism. As a government, we are deeply concerned by the issue of hate against Jewish communities. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or hate in any form is unacceptable and has no place in this country.

The government encourages all those affected by hate propaganda to contact law enforcement, as well as local elected officials, if they have safety concerns revolving around hateful speech or actions in a community. As my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety reminded the House today, the minister has already referred the listing of Samidoun to our national security experts and asked for an emergency and urgent review.

As a government, we have taken the action necessary to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of hate in Canada, and we will continue to do so. We will continue this work to keep Canadians safe.

## IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we had a consensus on immigration. It was never a controversial topic. We had the best immigration system in the world; it was the envy of the world. It was a system that brought in the brightest and the best. It was a system that had integrity. It was a system that worked for newcomers and Canadians who have been here for generations. However, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government and five immigration ministers in that time, we have seen our immigration system fall apart. Our system is now full of chaos, full of fraud and full of abuse.

What is most concerning for me is that the current immigration minister wakes up every single morning, goes to the media and says that he is alarmed with what is going on, that he is shocked with his own department's failings. Do not take my word for it. His own colleagues have said the system is a mess and is out of control.

We have seen a record number of people in the low-wage stream of our TFW program. We have seen chaos in our international student program. We have students coming to our country for degrees that we do not need from colleges that do not exist. Recently, we saw a massive surge in asylum claims after the changes the government made.

Canada's population growth is at about 3.4%. That is not sustainable. Again, do not take my word for it. The Prime Minister himself has said that Canada's immigration rate has grown "beyond what Canada has been able to absorb". These are record numbers, and they put pressure not only on housing, services and health care, but also on the labour market for our youth. We saw a 14% youth unemployment rate this past summer because of folks coming here through the low-wage stream and abusing that process. Greedy corporations were also abusing it.

This is not a problem that started today. The government was warned by officials that its reckless policies would cause a housing crisis and would put pressure on our health care system. The government ignored it.

In 2018, the government removed the police clearance certificate requirement for temporary residents coming to our country. Recently, we found out from a media investigation, a story that came out, that government officials were told to skip over crucial vetting for the temporary foreign worker program.

This is weakening our system. It is jeopardizing our country. It is not only putting Canadians at risk, but also breaking a system that was once the envy of the world, a system that everyone wanted to copy, a system that had integrity.

My question for the minister is very simple. We have seen new ministers. We have seen new announcements. We have seen a lot of photo ops. However, we have not seen any changes to our country's immigration system. Why is the minister so negligent? Why has he broken Canada's immigration system, which is not only causing chaos for newcomers but also hurting Canadians?



*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1905)

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Canada recognizes that international students enrich Canada's society and culture. We have a process in place to welcome and support international students while also maintaining the safety of Canadians.

Everyone applying to come to Canada must meet our eligibility and admissibility requirements. As part of our risk mitigation process, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, in collaboration with the Canada Border Services Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, conducts comprehensive security screenings to identify those who might pose a threat to Canadians.

Let me assure the hon. member that all foreign nationals applying for study permits are assessed for criminality. We do this by collecting their biometrics, that is, their fingerprints and photographs. Biometrics are a very reliable method of determining admissibility, more than any one document, such as a local police—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member may have his phone on his desk and it is causing some problems for the interpreters. He may want to put it on the chair instead.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Madam Speaker, biometrics are a more reliable method of determining admissibility than any one document, such as a police certificate. They unequivocally verify an applicant's identity and therefore lead us to any information that is accessible about them. We check every applicant's biometrics against a wide range of databases, from the RCMP in Canada to U.S. immigration and international partner holdings, to identify any potential security risk. Immigration officers then carefully review each application on a case-by-case basis.

Decisions on admissibility are evidence-based and risk-informed, and they follow rules around procedural fairness. Officers may request any additional documents they deem necessary to make a recommendation on a final decision, such as police or additional intelligence reports. However, I should note that, depending on the country of origin, police certificates are not always reliable. Final decisions on admissibility are made at the border by a CBSA officer.

I am disappointed that the Conservatives have been sharing misinformation and attempting to stoke division and drive fear into the hearts of Canadians. I cannot say that I am surprised. After all, it was a Conservative Party that promised to create a barbaric cultural practices hotline that would encourage Canadians to spy on one another. It was the Conservative Party that kept families apart through limited family reunification targets, all because they did not want to let too many seniors into the country. It was the Conservative Party

that accuses vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees of abusing Canada's generosity. The Conservatives are doing what they know best, misleading and dividing Canadians. I will not stand for it nor will I dignify their tactics.

As I outlined earlier, all international students are subject to a robust and comprehensive security screening prior to coming to Canada. This includes biometric screening, which then goes through our RCMP database in Canada, U.S. immigration and our international partner holdings. If necessary, an officer can request a police certificate, though I will note that, depending on the country of origin, it is not necessary.

• (1910)

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Madam Speaker, it is the government that has divided Canadians and misled Canadians for the last nine years. The member opposite talks about the reliability of police certificates. I do not understand this. They may be useful or they may not be useful, but for a permanent resident application, they are a mandatory requirement. If they are not reliable, why are they a requirement for that program?

Also, if we cannot trust a document from a certain country, how can we accept any other documents that are part of that package as well? How can we rely on those documents? Over the summer, we saw a string of potential terrorist attacks that were stopped at the 11th hour. A potential terrorist was going to stab folks in Toronto and someone was going to travel to New York, here on a potential student visa.

Can the minister please let us know what other safety measures they are going to put in place so that Canadians trust in their immigration system?

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Madam Speaker, I reiterate that all foreign nationals who come to Canada are required to meet our eligibility and admissibility requirements. As well, all foreign nationals applying for student permits are assessed for criminality, primarily through biometric collection. IRCC also collaborates with its partners to conduct thorough security screenings. An officer can request additional documents, such as a police certificate where needed.

The Conservatives keep referring to a 2018 policy change. There has been no policy change regarding police certificates for temporary residents. Unfortunately, the Conservative Party continues to spread misinformation. On this side of the House, we will continue to build a stronger framework to support and protect international students and Canadians alike.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:13 p.m.)



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