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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 21, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*English*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, June 10, it is my duty to table, in both official languages, a letter that I have received from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel regarding the order for the production of documents from the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada and the Auditor General of Canada.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 11 consideration of the motion, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the Friday before Thanksgiving, I talked about the culture of secrecy and the corruption in the form of conflicts of interest that was obvious right from the very beginning of the Liberal government. In the time I have left, I will talk about the situation we are in right now.

Parliament is paralyzed because the government has refused an order for the production of documents, which was passed by the House some time ago. That is why we are here. The Conservatives are not interested in simply letting debate on this motion collapse so the House can fob this off to a parliamentary committee, where the government and its NDP partners can buy more time, maybe delay a final report or maybe avoid a further vote finding the government once again in contempt of Parliament. The Conservatives want the government to comply with the order. The Conservatives want the government to produce the documents that the House voted for.

The Liberals are stuck in the old debate, which the House has already settled. That debate was whether the House should order that

documents be turned over to the RCMP, but that ship has sailed. That question is academic. The House has already voted on that question. The House voted to produce documents, so the government's refusal to do so now is a contempt of Parliament. You, Mr. Speaker, have ruled that this refusal is prima facie evidence of contempt of Parliament, which is why this question is being debated to the exclusion of all business of the House.

I would like to address the two main points the government House Leader and her parliamentary secretary keep making over and over again during debate in the House, to the media outside the House and during question period.

First, government members have repeatedly claimed that the government's contempt for Parliament is somehow justified because the order for the production of documents threatens the charter rights of accused persons and prosecutorial independence, while of course ignoring that it is violating section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is the guarantor of democracy. This argument is one of the dumbest things I have ever heard in the House of Commons, and in nine years in the House, I have heard some pretty dumb things come from the government. Before addressing that argument, it has to be pointed out that Vice-Admiral Mark Norman and Jody Wilson-Raybould might have something to say about the government's track record on prosecutorial independence, but I do not have time to go into the old scandals. I will deal with the argument that government members have made.

Ordering the production of documents that belong to the Crown in order to give them to another agency of the Crown, the RCMP, has nothing to do with directing prosecutions. Saying so is just plain dumb. Does the order the House has voted for say that the House instructs the RCMP to arrest a particular Liberal insider who took the public's money and gave it to themselves? No, the order does not say that. Does the order direct Crown prosecution services to prosecute somebody in particular, one of the Liberal insiders who, again, took the public's money and voted to give it to themselves? No, it does not direct anybody to do any such thing.

There is nothing in this production order that compels anyone to do anything besides release the documents and provide them to members of the RCMP so they can have evidence that may be potentially relevant to a case that they acknowledge they are already investigating. That is all this order does. It does not say anything about directing law enforcement or Crown prosecutors to do anything, so this bizarre charter argument is complete and total nonsense.

Privilege

The vigour and enthusiasm with which the government House Leader and her parliamentary secretary advance this argument can only be explained by blind faith in insipid talking points or by functional civic illiteracy. The House of Commons is the embodiment of Canadian democracy, Canada's grand inquisitive body that, on behalf of the people of Canada, who elect members, holds the executive branch, the most powerful people in Canada, to account. It is the will of elected members of Parliament, the will of Canadians, that must be respected.

The second main argument that I have heard from the government, and I am now starting to hear it creep into the other opposition parties propping up the government, is that continuing debate on this motion when all parties have said they will support it is paralyzing the House and preventing it from moving on to other business. However, this argument is a bit too clever. It is victim blaming and it is gaslighting. The Liberals are trying to say of elected members of Parliament that it is their fault for debating the government's corruption, and not the government's fault for refusing an order of the House. When they say this, they are missing the point altogether. Instead of studying contempt of Parliament at a parliamentary committee, the government could end its contempt of Parliament by releasing the documents. It could solve the problem rather than study the problem, and that is why we will continue to debate this motion until the documents are released.

As for the other business of the House, I have no interest in moving on from dealing with this corruption just so the government can introduce more bills and laws that are going to harm Canadians. I am not interested in allowing the government to get over the debate so it can introduce the long-anticipated ways and means motions on a capital gains tax increase that will punish thousands of small business owners in my riding, with few companies receiving the exemption being carved out for other Canadians. I am not interested in that.

I do not want to give the Liberals a chance to increase taxes on Canadians, to further sap the productivity of Canada and to further decrease per capita GDP, as we have observed under the Liberals. I am not interested in the rest of their agenda either. For example, a bill they may want to debate, Bill C-63, would create a new, big bureaucracy without doing anything to address online harms, and would give them a new group of insiders they could appoint to that board.

The only reservation I have about the time that has gone into this debate is that there is another urgent matter. We need to address the other contempt problem we have with the government, wherein the minister from Edmonton was engaging in private business while a minister of the Crown. The evidence could not be more clear on that. His business associate, who was involved in, among other things, shady pandemic profiteering, claimed that there was some other guy named "Randy", who we are supposed to believe is not the Minister of Employment. We need to get to the bottom of that as well.

There is another solution available: The government, if it thinks that Parliament is paralyzed, that we have other business we need to get to and that Parliament has become dysfunctional, has a remedy. The Liberals could call an election immediately. That is the solution. When Parliament is paralyzed, if they think Parliament is not

functioning, they can call an election. That is the beauty of the parliamentary system. The government always has recourse directly to the voters of Canada.

If the Liberals really think the opposition is irresponsible, that other things are more important, that critical parliamentary business is being stymied and that Canadians are on their side with the refusal to comply with an order of elected members of Parliament, they can call an election and let the people of Canada decide.

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's reference to the word "dumb". I will tell him about one of the dumbest things I have heard coming from the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. This is the leader who refuses to get a security clearance so he can be made aware of foreign interference. We know about the many allegations in regard to his leadership, not to mention what we hear about Conservative parliamentarians, yet the leader of the Conservatives is saying, "So what if I am leader? I do not need a security clearance; I prefer to be dumb." That is what he is saying about this issue.

Why is the member's leader scared to get a security clearance? Is it because he has something to hide?

The Speaker: Colleagues, I will move on to the answer from the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, but I encourage all members not to call into question the courage of members. It is an important aspect of maintaining parliamentary politeness in this place.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge has the floor.

• (1115)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that correction and also for correcting that member's unparliamentary behaviour. It was a nice deflection by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, which was entirely unrelated to the present debate. He may want to ask himself about the Prime Minister, whom he supports, using a judicial inquiry to make a partisan broadside against the Leader of the Opposition, which is disgraceful.

If the Liberals have nothing to hide, why will they not release the names on that issue and why will they not release the documents on this issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative colleagues talk a lot about corruption. One way to combat corruption in politics is to have a system where political parties receive a per-vote subsidy. The Conservatives are the ones who did away with that system.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am going to stick to questions that are related to the speech I made. That question is not relevant to my debate.

Privilege

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the first part of my colleague's speech the week before last and then his finishing up today. He did a great job summing up the corruption we have seen from across the way. I would like to give the member a little more time to talk about what his constituents are saying when he is out door knocking and about what he has seen in his nine years of being a member of Parliament in the House.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the most common thing I hear when I am door knocking in Calgary is, "When is the election coming, and how soon can it be here so we can get rid of this government so it can stop bringing in policies that harm Canadians, especially western Canadians?"

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member said my question was not necessarily relevant because he did not like it. He feels a little uncomfortable. However, when we are talking about accountability, he is talking about paper production. We are talking about information that the leader of the Conservative Party does not want to hear.

The leader of the Conservative Party wants to be prime minister of a G8 country, yet he does not want to get the security clearance. Canadians have a right to know why he is so scared of getting the security clearance. Does he have something to hide?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the member could perhaps check with the Table and get the orders of the day to understand what we are debating here today, or he could have listened to my speech, and then he could debate the actual motion before the House. It is a tactic, a deflection, and he is very good at that, but I will take the bait and say that the issue he is so fixated on could be solved easily: release the names.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated your intervention earlier. I felt like we were off to a rough start for a Monday morning. With all due respect, I think that it is soon going to take more than a warning when members get out of hand like that and start saying that others are dumb. This is not the place for that. I needed to say that.

Here is my question for the member about his speech. I find it rather odd that the member told my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île that his question was not relevant. We are talking about corruption and about influence on governments. My colleague brought up public funding of political parties. Public funding of political parties is another example of how Quebec is a good 10 to 15 years ahead of everyone else. The Government of Quebec reformed party financing in 2012. Now, contributions are limited. Rationally speaking, who really thinks that ordinary citizens are giving \$1,700 to a political party, even if they do get a tax refund? The system needs to be reformed. A per-vote subsidy is a reasonable way to ensure respect for democracy and to limit outside influence.

I would like my colleague to answer the question.

• (1120)

The Speaker: Before moving on to the member's answer, I want to respond to the member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

I appreciate his comments about using parliamentary language. While that word is not forbidden, it is borderline. I heard it from both sides of the House, which is why I wanted to call everyone to order.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am quite certain that my remarks on the record were in order. I do not know if you heard something from other parts of the chamber that was not on the record. You would be the first to tell me if there was anything out of line in that speech. I gave a pretty clear description and debate about the motion at hand in the House of Commons.

It is disappointing that so many other members want to talk about anything other than what we are debating, which is the government's refusal to comply with an order of the House of Commons. If government members want to talk about election financing models, they could use an opposition day in the future for that, if they wish, or we could have some other debate about that, but I am not going to be distracted from this motion by engaging in that issue.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague about the seriousness of how, in fact, the Auditor General found over 180 incidents of conflict of interest with the board members at SDTC. The total was \$400 million for approximately half of the actual contracts given out by the organization, so it could potentially be even more.

I wonder if the member could speak to the actual seriousness of what we are discussing here today.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for what is actually a really intelligent question about the matter at hand. We have had comments about all kinds of other things but that was right to the point.

The House voted for the production of documents because of an Auditor General report, as well as whistle-blower testimony about severe corruption at SDTC, where Liberal insiders voted to give themselves and their companies, which they control and own, the public's money improperly. This is well documented. It is under investigation by the RCMP. That is why this is so serious and that is the reason for the extraordinary step of a production order that was made by the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed by the member's lack of recognition, so I will ask him for his personal opinion. Does he believe the leader of the Conservative Party should be getting a security clearance, given the fact that every other leader in the House of Commons will? If he does not believe that, will he tell Canadians why the leader of the Conservative Party is scared to get that security clearance?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am on the record from my time at the defence committee about the need for parliamentarians to have clearances, so that is not the question nor the point here. I do not agree with the member, as the opposition leader has been very clear on this all the way along.

Privilege

However, every time the member rises in this debate, he is engaging in filibuster. He is filling time to extend the government's words and not advance debate.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add my voice to the conversation we are having around the government's breach of privilege and scandal, which is just the latest in a long line of scandals under the Liberal government.

I have a number of points to make in this debate, but I will first say it is unfortunate that we are having to have this debate. It is an important one because the government needs to be held accountable, but it is unfortunate that it is necessary when there are many things the House could and should be dealing with. We have a government that refuses to be accountable, and without accountability, accountability first to this House but, more importantly, as an extension, to Canadians, we do not have a democracy.

Right now, the government refuses to be held accountable. There are a number of examples, and I will raise a few of them in the course of my speech today. This is just the latest in a long line of them and it is incredibly unfortunate that we are having to be here today to try to hold a government accountable on something so basic, without the need for a debate like this one to highlight such a situation.

What we are talking about today relates to what has become known as the green slush fund. The Auditor General of Canada has found that the Liberal government turned what was known as Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal insiders. The board that was set up to hand out these grants gave itself almost 400 million dollars' worth of contracts inappropriately. That was \$400 million of Canadian taxpayers' money.

I will pause for just a second. That is a lot of money, \$400 million from Canadians who have worked hard. They have packed their lunch, put on their work boots, gone to work and worked hard. Some people back home in my province of Alberta work really long hours. It is back-breaking work, in some cases. These people go to work, in many cases, away from their families because they have to travel up north or to other places to work. They do that because they need to feed and put a roof over the heads of their families. They need to ensure their children have opportunities to be involved in sports or to succeed as they grow, mature and become adults themselves. This \$400 million has not gone to feed Canadians' families, to put a roof over their heads, to make sure their kids go to summer camp, play a sport, take dance lessons or art lessons or any of that. The \$400 million has gone, in this one case, to make Liberal insiders rich.

I do not think anyone who gets out of bed early in the morning and leaves their family to go to work would say they would not mind a bit of that, or in fact, a whole lot of it in this case, going to Liberal insiders because the Liberal Party wants to buy favour with people and hopefully keep itself in power. I do not think anybody in this country would say they get out of bed in the morning to send their tax dollars to Ottawa so this kind of thing can go on.

• (1125)

That is the kind of accountability we are talking about right now. We are talking about holding a government accountable for the \$400 million of hard-earned Canadian taxpayer dollars that are sent to Ottawa so that those guys over there, the Liberal government, can send them out to their friends and make them rich. That is what we are talking about today, and that is pretty sad. We would never even be needing to have a conversation like this if that government had just a bit of basic accountability, but this is not something people have come to expect from the Liberal government. It is why it is time for the government to go. It is why it is time for it to be replaced.

An hon. member: Time's up.

Mr. Blake Richards: Exactly, the time is up for those guys, and Canadians know it.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that is standing in the way of that is an election. As soon as that happens, the Liberal government will be gone, because the Liberals have failed to show any basic accountability.

This is almost \$400 million of hard-earned Canadian taxpayer dollars. The Auditor General had a look at all of this and found that \$58 million went to 10 different projects that were completely ineligible. There was no ability on any of those occasions to demonstrate any environmental benefit or any development of green technology, and it was supposed about that.

Let us think about that for a second: 10 different projects received \$58 million but did not meet the criteria for which the money was intended. They did not provide any environmental benefit. They did not develop any green technology. One would say that it almost looks like that money was stolen. There was no benefit based on the criteria of the program; for all intents and purposes, \$58 million of Canadian taxpayer money stolen.

Then there were 186 projects, worth about \$334 million, where at least one of the board members had a conflict of interest.

An hon. member: What, 186? Shocking.

Mr. Blake Richards: There were 186 projects where there was a conflict of interest by one of the board members.

Mr. Speaker, another \$58 million went to projects where the board did not ensure the contribution agreement terms were met. Let me put it this way. This is either the most egregious case of incompetence we have ever seen or it is the complete theft of taxpayer money. It might be both, in fact. However, it is staggering to imagine the magnitude of this and the number of instances where there are conflicts of interest or outright complete ignorance of the rules. It is staggering. The amount of money is also staggering.

The Auditor General has made it very clear that the blame lies with the Liberal government, particularly with the industry minister, because they did not monitor this. Either they did not monitor it, or maybe they were okay with what was happening. I do not know. I suppose that is part of what we need to determine.

Privilege

At the end of the day, this money, this nearly \$400 million of Canadian taxpayer money, was given to Liberal insiders. In order to try to get to the bottom of all of this, there is a need for the information being requested to be provided to the RCMP. For some reason, and I think we can all imagine what that reason might be, the Liberal government does not want to provide that information.

I can imagine the Liberal government does not like being held accountable, and we have many examples of that. I will get into a few of those examples, because this is a pattern, and I want to show and establish that pattern. This is a government that tends to do these kinds of things. It interferes or allows things like this to occur, and its friends get rich. This is a pattern. Then when there is any effort at trying to hold it accountable for what has gone on, it does everything it can to prevent being held accountable.

• (1130)

Let me speak to a couple of examples where we can see this pattern, and this is the latest example in that pattern. The most well-known of those examples was the SNC-Lavalin affair. Everyone in Canada is aware of that one. They are all aware of what happened with Jody Wilson-Raybould, when the Prime Minister tried to pressure her to be inappropriately involved in her role as the attorney general.

She stood on her principle and refused to do that, despite immense pressure from the Prime Minister. What did he do? He fired her because she refused to interfere inappropriately in an investigation. She knew it was wrong and the Prime Minister did not care. He wanted her to do it anyway. Essentially that is what happened. She refused, despite all the pressure she received from the Prime Minister of our country. For that, she lost her job.

To give a little more context, a Liberal-connected firm faced charges of fraud and corruption related to payments made to Libyan officials. In this situation, again, the Prime Minister interfered to help out his friends. It was found, in this case, that he violated the Conflict of Interest Act, which is not the only time this happened. Where this becomes really germane, is that we discovered later on, I believe it was last year, that the reason the RCMP was unable to pursue a criminal investigation was because the Prime Minister refused to provide the information that was necessary.

We see this pattern of a government that refuses, when it is caught red-handed, to provide the accountability, the documents, in this case, that are needed to properly investigate it.

I can give another example of that type of scenario, and there are many of them. In fact, almost every week there seems to be a new one. There is the scandal around the Winnipeg national microbiology lab. The situation was so bad that the government was ordered to provide documents and a former Speaker was sued by his own government because it was trying to find a way to not provide that information.

It sounds so ridiculous that it is almost hard to believe it is true, but that is the kind of thing we are seeing. That is one of those examples. The government wanted so badly to hide this information that it sued the Speaker of the House of Commons, one of its own members of Parliament. It is astounding.

I want to focus a little more on one, with respect to these examples, because it is one of the files I am tasked with shadowing the government on, and that is Veterans Affairs. There are many examples like this one, but it is one I am very intimately familiar with because of how much effort I and other Conservative members of the Veterans Affairs committee have put into trying to see addressed. It is the controversy and scandal around the national monument to the mission in Afghanistan.

• (1135)

Let me give a bit of context on this. This was obviously a monument to a mission that ended more than a decade ago. The previous Conservative government announced that it would be built. In the nine years since the Liberal government has been in power, it has somehow found a way to ensure that this has not been built.

In my opinion, and, I think, in the opinion of many Canadians, it is an incredible slap in the face to those who served in that mission, those who gave their lives serving our country in that mission and the families of those fallen. It is another extreme example of the government: first, showing complete incompetence; and, second, trying to avoid accountability. Essentially, what happened was it set up a jury to determine what the monument design should be. This was after taking years to get to that point. I do not know how something so important could not be a priority for a government, for any government, frankly, but it was not, for whatever reason, and the government will have to answer to veterans for that.

The government did set up this jury process. This is an internationally recognized process. The jury selected the monument that it believed best fit the criteria. In about a year-and-a-half period after that, we had enough information that the Prime Minister and his office interfered in the process to try to change the result. Eventually, it culminated in an announcement of a different design than what was agreed to by the jury. This is the first time that anyone can recall in the history of these types of processes across the world, that the selection has been disregarded by a government.

• (1140)

No real explanation was given. To this day, we still do not know why the Prime Minister interfered in this. The reason why this is so relevant is because it is another example where, over the course of months, the veterans affairs committee has been trying to get the release of documentation that would indicate what exactly occurred in that year and a half when the Prime Minister was interfering. Why did he interfere? The fact that the government will not tell us that there was a good reason probably indicates that it is not something good and that it is trying its best to cover that up. That is the only thing we can conclude from all of that.

Privilege

It is another example of a government that is doing everything it possibly can to avoid releasing some documents that would allow it to be held accountable for its actions; in this case, actions that dishonour the memory of Canadians who gave their lives in service to our country. It is bad enough that \$400 million of hard-earned taxpayer money was given away to Liberal insiders, but it is far worse that the Liberal government has dishonoured the memory of Canadians who gave their lives in service to our country. Imagine how their families must feel, knowing that it has done that. That is just insult to injury. To then try to be not held accountable for that kind of action is really disgraceful.

This is a pattern, and I could go on and on because there are so many other examples of a government that just does not want to be held accountable. When we have a government that refuses to be accountable, we know the situation. We know that this is a government that has reached a point where it is almost corruption, and I think that all Canadians would agree. It is not “almost”; it is corruption, frankly. Canadians want to see it held accountable and they want to see an election so they can do just that.

• (1145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only prime minister in Canada's history, let alone that of the British Commonwealth, to be held in contempt of Parliament was Stephen Harper. The greatest advocate for Stephen Harper at that time was none other than the leader of the Conservative Party. Is there any surprise there?

The leader of the Conservative Party now says that he does not need to have security clearance and that, at the end of the day, he would prefer to be naive about foreign interference as opposed to understanding the issue. What is in the past history of the current leader of the Conservative Party that disallows him from being able to get his security clearance?

Can the member opposite share with Canadians what Pierre Poilievre, or the Conservative leader, is hiding that prevents him from getting security clearance?

The Speaker: I see that the member quickly caught himself. I remind all members to be very careful. When there is a current member of the House, out of respect, we use their riding name or title they hold.

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, as is most of what the member says in the House, that is complete hogwash. The Leader of the Opposition has security clearance. He is a member of the Privy Council of Canada. He has had security clearance since he was sworn in as a minister of the Crown.

Having said that, as the Leader of the Opposition, his job is to hold the government to account. In this situation, the government is trying to find a way to silence him. That is why it wants him to have a briefing where he cannot disclose the information. The Conservative leader has said very clearly that the government should release the names of anyone involved; however, as always, the government refuses to be accountable and to do just that. I say shame on the government.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I know all members have had the opportunity to have a restful break and come back to the House with lots of enthusiasm, but I am going to ask the hon. member for Waterloo not to take the floor unless recognized by the Speaker, so there is not a back and forth between members.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a lot to unravel in the SDTC file. There is likely some fraud, embezzlement and so on involved, but I would like to ask our Conservative colleague a question.

Some people have resigned, including a prestigious business leader, Annette Verschuren. Her companies received a lot of money and, interestingly enough, she was Stephen Harper's economic adviser from 2008 to 2015.

It is easy to blame the government. The Conservatives are right and we are correct to blame the government for this situation. However, can our Conservative friends do a little navel-gazing and give us some background on Ms. Verschuren?

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, today, we are talking about a situation in which there was a green slush fund. It looks as though it was probably created for that purpose. We had an issue with almost \$400 million in taxpayers' money. As I indicated during my speech, 10 of the projects were completely ineligible. In another 186 cases, there were conflicts of interest with members on the board, and that is what we are talking about. We have \$400 million in Canadian taxpayers' money that went to Liberal insiders inappropriately, and that is something that we are trying to hold the government to account for. All members of the House should be trying to drive toward that today.

• (1150)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been sitting here listening to the member for Winnipeg North spread misinformation relating to whether the leader of the official opposition should have security clearance. The reality is that information in this country is overclassified, and things that should be declassified should be made—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member is very clearly, according to Beauchesne's, impugning my motives by saying that I am spreading misinformation. Everything I said was factual.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this point. There is a lot of lively debate going on in the House, and the Chair will monitor it very carefully. I would encourage all members to be judicious in their choice of words.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Privilege

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North continually stands up and filibusters for the government. This comes down to the information we are debating, which is the release of documents. The government refuses to hand them over to the House and the RCMP to ensure that Canadians can see exactly what is going on. We also know that he keeps raising this false pretense that the member for Nepean has all the information they need.

I would say this: The information is overclassified. Why does the government not declassify it? What are the Liberals trying to hide?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. There is no doubt about that.

The answer is a bit more difficult. The reason it is so difficult is that, as with many of the examples I gave during my speech, we have a government that refuses to be held to account. It refuses to provide basic information that would allow it to be accountable for its actions, in this case, for giving out \$400 million in Canadian taxpayer money to the government members' friends. I suspect the only reason the members do not want to release the names and the information is that they know it would be damning to the government. It would be held to account, and its members would be fired in the next election.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Waterloo, especially when it comes to the important information we are hearing.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, when you hear clear heckles and know who they are from, you will not call them out by name according to their ridings; you have no problem naming me by my riding, because there is such a shortage of women in this place. That is a double standard of this place that has always been alive and well, so I appreciate that it continues.

My question, though it might be difficult for the member, is a genuine question. It is on the question of privilege—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to point to the comment that the Liberal member opposite was making about heckling. I have been sitting here listening to her heckle continually for the last 15 minutes. About every 20 seconds, she decides to heckle something. Here she is supposedly calling out members when she is the biggest offender this morning.

• (1155)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, we can see who is in the House and will not say who is not in the House, because we do not do that. However, I think it was quite clear when I received the floor as you provided it to me, Mr. Speaker, that we heard other people trying to take space and that you knew who it was. That was the point I was making.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member opposite made reference to people not being in this chamber, particularly women. I believe that, if we did a count,

which we will not, we would have just as many if not more women than men in the chamber.

The Speaker: I am just going to stop the hon. member there.

The hon. member for Waterloo very carefully and artfully pointed out the people who are present. She made a specific point of not referring to people who are absent.

I am going to let the hon. member for Waterloo briefly pose her question.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the time was paused during the points of order.

In the member's speech, he referred to former members, including a former minister of justice. I recall, when I was the government House leader, how disrespectful the official opposition was towards that member. During that time, we also had another indigenous MP who served in this place and who spoke quite eloquently, when they were leaving this chamber, as to why they were leaving, because it was so isolating. Today, the member speaks to the government's responsibility but does not want to take any responsibility as part of an official opposition that was quite disrespectful.

I believe everyone supports this question of privilege. Does the member know of any member or any party that is opposed to it? Why not call the question so that we could actually get to the work that this question of privilege is asking for?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, this is much like the heckles that the member imagined. She imagines a lot of things.

At the end of the day, we are talking about \$400 million of Canadian taxpayers' hard-earned money that was essentially stolen. Canadian taxpayers worked hard to earn this money, and it was taken and given to Liberal insiders. We are trying to hold the government to account.

I actually do not know what the member was referring to. However, to try to deflect and take attention away from that issue by raising something else is to be complicit in that corruption.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am going to stray from the formula that has been playing out for the last few minutes and ask a question that has to do with the subject at hand. Actually, I will take up the question asked by my colleague opposite, which was indeed relevant, but I will add a few details.

This is not the first Liberal scandal we have seen. We all remember WE Charity. We remember ArriveCAN. It seems to be a common technique. Everyone in the House agrees that these documents should be produced.

Could my colleague tell us when we will be ready to vote on this to force the government to produce these documents?

Privilege

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that the Liberal government has far too often shirked its obligation to be accountable to Canadian taxpayers for money that so many Canadians have worked so hard for. The government is not accountable.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise on behalf of my constituents in Calgary Confederation, and I would like to speak to the matter before the House.

As many are already aware, we find ourselves debating an issue of great concern as you, Mr. Speaker, have found this Liberal government in contempt of the House for its failure to produce documents, specifically unredacted documents related to the Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, fund, which is a program widely known as the green slush fund. The Liberals' failure to produce unredacted documents is because of this Liberal government's mismanagement.

The green slush fund has been accused of giving grants to start-up businesses and developing accelerators with strong ties to senior management in this Liberal government, in violation of ethical behaviour. This is very concerning to us on the Conservative side of the House and obviously needs to be investigated to determine the facts and the appropriate course of action.

Of course, we are deeply concerned to hear about the damning facts from the Auditor General that would lead us all to believe that there may be some Liberal insiders who are lining their pockets with taxpayer dollars, while Canadians across this country are struggling to make ends meet. As I mentioned, the green slush fund management has been accused of giving questionable business grants to those with ties to senior management in the Liberal government. I stress, once again, that this needs to be properly investigated.

The Prime Minister's hand-picked chair of the green tech slush fund, Annette Verschuren, a long-time friend of the PM, siphoned \$217,000 of taxpayer dollars from this green slush fund into her own company. The Ethics Commissioner also found that Ms. Verschuren broke the law by her actions of improperly furthering her private interests, and the interests of other companies she is associated with, by failing to recuse herself from the board's funding decisions. Ultimately, she ended up resigning. As members know, she resigned last year after she became the subject of this ethics investigation. On top of this, another Prime Minister-appointed green slush fund board member also broke ethics laws.

Now, Canadians deserve to have these green slush fund documents properly and thoroughly examined to determine who committed the wrongdoings and at whose direction. We know from the Auditor General that the wrongdoing discovered has not been appropriately addressed by this Liberal government; we know, because officials confirmed that there has been no action taken after proven gross mismanagement and conflicts of interest were found at the hands of this Liberal billion-dollar green slush fund.

I have listened to the Liberals over the past weeks on this issue trying to whitewash what is going on here. Instead of transparency

and clarity, we have been met with silence, deflection and refusal to release all of the findings. What are they hiding?

It is important to remind Canadians of what we know, and what we know comes directly from the Auditor General. Canadians have deep respect for the independent Office of the Auditor General and the work it does daily to uncover mismanagement in this Liberal government.

I used to serve on the Standing Committee of Public Accounts, and the Auditor General, Karen Hogan, would regularly come to the meetings to report on the many files that her office forensically investigated. Each and every time, she provided valuable, objective, fact-based information and she gave expert advice on the findings.

• (1205)

The office is incredibly thorough in the audit work that it does to uncover any irregularities in the accounting and procedural practices of government programs. I was always highly impressed with the quality of work that she and her staff did while I served on the public accounts committee.

The Auditor General did look into the green slush fund and her findings were shocking. She and her office found the fund violated its conflict of interest policies 90 times. The fund awarded \$59 million to 10 projects that were ineligible and the managers of these projects frequently overstated the required environmental benefits of their projects. The report from the Auditor General says things like, "Overall, we found significant lapses in Sustainable Development Technology Canada's governance and stewardship of public funds." The report also said that "Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada did not sufficiently monitor the compliance with the contribution agreements between the foundation and the Government of Canada." There is more from the Auditor General. The report also said, "We found that the foundation awarded funding to projects that were ineligible, that conflicts of interest existed in some instances, and that certain requirements in the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act were not met."

It does not stop there. The report also says, "We found that the foundation awarded funding to 10 ineligible projects of 58 we examined. These 10 projects were awarded \$59 million even though they did not meet key requirements set out in the contribution agreements between the government and the foundation." There were 10 projects of the 58 that the Auditor General examined. We can imagine what would have been uncovered if all 58 projects had been examined by the Auditor General.

Privilege

The Auditor General dropped another bombshell when she said in the report, “In addition, we estimated that 1 in 10 of the remaining Start-up and Scale-up projects approved during our audit period were also ineligible.” It is unbelievable that 10% of the projects were estimated to be ineligible. Who is lining whose pockets with this type of behaviour? We have good reason to be suspicious of those involved at the highest level because of what the Auditor General has discovered.

Let me go on with the report. It also said in the report, “...we found 90 cases that were connected to approval decisions, representing nearly \$76 million in funding awarded to projects, where the foundation’s conflict-of-interest policies were not followed.” Therefore, it is no wonder that the Liberals are not keen to have anyone review these documents.

We also know from the Auditor General that attempts were made to keep the dirty circle of secrets as small as possible. The AG revealed that “The act requires that the foundation have a member council of 15 members.” That is 15 members to play an important role in representing Canadian taxpayers to oversee the ethical functioning of the foundation, while the green slush fund board of directors supported reducing that number from 15 down to two members. Why would directors of a \$1-billion slush fund want to keep their circle so small, down to two members? Inquiring minds want to know. It is likely because they know it would be easier to get away with their dirty secrets if fewer people knew. We will only know if the proper investigation takes place and that is why the RCMP needs to have access to all the documents in an unredacted form.

● (1210)

I want to also mention a few other key findings from the Auditor General. The report states the fund’s board approved 226 start-up, scale-up and ecosystem projects to receive \$836 million. Of those projects, eight, totalling \$51 million, did not meet eligibility criteria. For example, some projects “did not support the development or demonstration of a new technology, or their projected environmental benefits were unreasonable.”

It also says in the AG report that the AG estimated that one in 10 of the remaining 168 start-up and scale-up projects approved during the audit period, or 16 projects in total, were ineligible. Totalling \$8 million, two ecosystem projects were ineligible, because “they did not fund or support the development or demonstration of a new technology”, and the board approved \$20 million for seed projects without completing screening and assessments required by the contribution agreements with the government.

This is unbelievable, yet it is true. How can these Liberal members opposite find the gall to stand up here daily and suggest that this matter is not worthy of a full investigation? How can they look at themselves in the mirror and say that? This is troubling. The lack of transparency, accountability and integrity from the Liberal government is an issue that strikes at the very core of how we as Canadians expect our government to operate.

What was the incentive to break so many rules and who benefited? Who provided the direction to allow for so much of this mismanagement? We know that when people break rules, it is always for their personal gain at the expense of the greater good. Why

would we expect this case to be any different and where has the Liberal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry been all along? I can say he has likely been sleeping on the job here, and he must follow his green slush fund chairperson, Ms. Verschuren, in her steps and resign.

Canadians will remember the corruption of this Liberal government come the next election. I guarantee it. This Liberal government members are in full damage control right now in a desperate attempt to save their parliamentary jobs. It is no wonder the Liberals do not want to let Canadians anywhere near ballot box, because they know Canadians are itching to get rid of them. This is why we need an election now to let Canadians decide.

Canadians are paying attention to this. While they are struggling, this Liberal government ignores their plight. The real income of Canadians has plummeted to a level not seen in almost a decade. Paycheques are just not as powerful as they used to be. Canadians are falling behind as the cost of living increases faster than the ability of their paycheques to keep up. The dependency of Canadians on food banks is growing exponentially and shows no sign of slowing down. It is frankly shocking and deeply unsettling that people who have decent jobs are unable to put enough food on the table in a country like Canada.

We know housing in Canada is out of reach for basically anyone who does not already have a home. The price of housing, including rent, continues to outpace wages. Folks work harder and fall further behind. How is that right in a country like Canada? Canada’s fastest-growing housing type is a tent. Tent cities, a phenomenon not really ever seen in Canada, are now a part of every city and even many towns. People just cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves in Canada today. How desperate must life be, when one lives in a tent in the winter here in Canada? That is why Canadians are so concerned and why they are so angered when they hear of Liberals lining their pockets.

● (1215)

Canadians know that the government is beyond repair and that it is time for an election. However, any election should not and will not eliminate our calls for accountability when it comes to the slush fund. We will get to the truth of the matter. We owe it to Canadians to pursue the facts and to hold the people responsible for the mismanagement accountable. If there is criminality, we owe it to Canadians to pursue charges against the people involved.

Privilege

Millions of Canadians are struggling to pay rent, pay their mortgage, put food on their table and put gas in their car. Nonetheless, they go to work every day and they pay their taxes. We need to make sure we treat those hard-working Canadians with utmost respect. Every tax dollar is a missed meal, a missed night out, a new pair of jeans or a visit to a sick relative. Taxes are essential for our society, but they come with a cost to the individual. We need to ensure that if we are going to deprive Canadians of a home of their own, a haircut or a new book, we do it with the utmost necessity and spend the money as if it were our own.

I can assure the House that not a single member opposite mismanages their personal finances at a level that the Liberals do when it comes to our money, the money of Canadian taxpayers. I am just astounded that the Liberal MPs opposite continue to defend and support their party leader and the disgusting behaviour of their governance. What will their children and grandchildren think of them when the truth finally gets out? It will get out.

The Speaker, of all people, knows how important it is that Canadians have faith in and respect for our institutions. That faith and respect come when people see that our institutions are functioning as intended, rules are being followed and individuals are not personally enriching themselves with tax dollars.

To restore faith in Parliament, faith in government, we need to ensure that a proper investigation is done, which is possible only when the RCMP has everything it needs to do a proper review. Therefore the Liberal government must release the documents now.

Moving forward, there are steps to rebuilding trust and accountability. The Auditor General's report is not just criticism but also a call to action. We need to take the following steps to address the issue. First of all, the minister needs to resign. Second, the new minister needs to implement four things. They need to strengthen the oversight mechanism; this is essential. We need clear, robust guidelines for the allocation of funds, with a transparent review process to ensure that projects that meet strict environmental criteria receive support. We also need regular audits by the Auditor General to monitor how funds are being used. We need a commitment to true sustainability; we must focus on the original purpose of the fund's investing in projects that generally contribute to a cleaner, greener future. We need public engagement; the public deserves to know how its money is being spent.

In conclusion, the green slush fund was intended to be a catalyst for positive environmental change; instead, it has been a disappointing fiasco. It is imperative that we address the issues head-on and reaffirm our commitment to transparency, accountability and sustainability.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I look at the issue we are debating today and reflect on it a bit, I would suggest that the Conservative Party needs to go back and look at the only prime minister to date to have been held in contempt of Parliament, who is Stephen Harper. Guess who the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister was at the time. It was none other than the leader of the Conservative Party today, the great defender of that contempt of Parliament.

Now the leader of the Conservative Party feels that he does not need to get a security clearance so he can be informed on foreign international interference, a concern Canadians have. I am looking to members opposite, any Conservative, to stand in their place and tell us why their leader will not get a security clearance so he can be informed like every other leader of the House. What is he hiding? What is in his past that Conservatives are not sharing with Canadians?

• (1220)

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, the question is a nice deflection again on the issue. The member continually asks the same question to deflect from the relevant issue at hand and being debated today: severe corruption at the SDTC, which has been well documented by the Auditor General and by whistle-blowers. It is very serious, and we need to uncover the facts of the matter. The unredacted documents need to be released to the RCMP for a full investigation. What are the Liberals trying to hide?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since my Conservative colleague wants to get to the bottom of things, I would like to ask him a question.

He mentioned Annette Verschuren, who he linked to the Liberal Party. Ms. Verschuren did receive considerable funding. She was an economic adviser to Stephen Harper from 2008 to 2015.

Does he realize that?

[*English*]

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, the chair of the green slush fund, Ms. Verschuren, resigned from the fund because of the Ethics Commissioner's investigation on her, which is what the minister should also do. He should resign and release the documents. That is the issue at hand.

The debate today, which has been going on for the last however many weeks, is about there being severe corruption; it is documented. The Auditor General has made it clear. In my speech, I went through many of the items in her report: severe, serious infractions by the fund development group. We need the unredacted documents to be released to the RCMP; that is the point. Why are the Liberals trying to hide them?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is my brother's member of Parliament.

Like the member, I have been in the House for many days of debate on the issue, but we are at the stage where we are not hearing anything new. I can summarize the last two weeks: The Liberals and Conservatives have been pointing fingers at each other, saying that each party was worse in government. The fact is that each of these parties is guilty of major scandals and of having withheld documents. They do not shine in the debate. One is actually as bad as the other.

Privilege

Let us get to what is going on in the House right now. The Conservatives are filibustering their own motion. The House of Commons costs about \$70,000 an hour to run. That is a lot of money being burned up right now, and we are doing absolutely nothing.

Like the member, I want to get to the bottom of this. I would love to see the documents, but as long as we are talking this through, we cannot get to the action part. If I were a judge in a case such as this, I would be asking counsel to make their closing arguments. When are we going to get to that stage? When are we going to get to the part where the House can actually take action, vote and proceed to the next question of privilege, which is about calling an individual before the bar to be admonished and to allow the House to ask questions of that individual?

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, I hope I meet the member's brother one day in my riding, as I door-knock daily when I am in Calgary. Maybe he can let me know where his brother lives. I can knock on his door and perhaps convince him to support the Conservative Party.

There is a way to end the current debate and move on in the House of Commons, and that is for the Liberal government to release all unredacted documents to the RCMP so there can be a full and clear study of what has been going on at the SDTC. That is what will end the debate.

• (1225)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member and I both come from provinces where protecting our environment is top of mind and crucial because of the makeup of our provinces. The government insists that its members are the ones who care about the environment; however, there is a fund specifically set up to help with that, and the tax dollars the government is collecting, in carbon tax supposedly, are being abused in this circumstance.

Could the member please comment on that?

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is completely right. Canadians have been paying hundreds of millions of dollars into the carbon tax to go to funds like the SDTC fund for the government to allocate to businesses. What do we hear? We hear that the businesses in question are not even eligible; they are businesses that have close ties to the Liberal government. It is a shame.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind our colleagues from the NDP, with the finger pointing back and forth, not to forget who has propped up the government through the corruption and scandals for the last four and a half years. They are just as guilty as those across the way.

Our hon. colleague gave a great speech summarizing the corruption over the last nine years and what we are dealing with here today. We are talking about over \$400 million of taxpayers' funds where the Auditor General found potential criminality and 186 points of conflicts of interest, where the chair and Liberal appointees siphoned the \$480 million. They essentially stole it.

I want to ask our hon. colleague this, because the Liberals are essentially asking us to let the issue go to committee: If somebody steals from him, does he go to a committee or to the RCMP?

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague summarized very clearly what has been going on. If somebody steals from me, whom do I go to? I go to the police. I don't go to some neighbour to figure out how to get my money back. This is where we are going here. We want the documents released to the RCMP so it can have a clear investigation and prosecute whoever has to be prosecuted.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in this situation, the leader of the Conservative Party says, "I want more information. I want to see the unredacted information." On the other hand, when it comes to foreign interference, an issue that Canadians are deeply concerned about, he does not want to get his security clearance.

What does Wesley Wark, who advised the Liberal and Conservative governments on national security, have to say? He says that the Tory leader "is 'playing with Canadians' by refusing to get a top-level security clearance and receive classified briefings on foreign interference."

The leader of the Conservative Party wants it both ways. Why is he choosing to play games with Canadians? What is it in his past that Canadians should be aware of that would prevent him from getting the security clearance?

The Deputy Speaker: With 30 seconds remaining, the hon. member for Calgary Confederation has the floor.

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, 30 seconds is just not enough time to answer the question. Also, it is not the issue at hand right now. It is not relevant to the debate we are having here today. There is severe corruption at the SDTC. It is well documented and very serious. We need the unredacted documents released to the RCMP.

Why will the government not release the documents to the RCMP? What are its members trying to hide?

The Deputy Speaker: Before going to the next speaker, I just want to wish my dad a very happy birthday.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish a happy birthday to your father. I am sure he is excited to watch the proceedings here every day.

Unfortunately, for me, this is not a happy occasion to be speaking in the House of Commons. It is my job to represent the electorate of Saskatoon West, to do things in their best interest and to put forward a positive vision of our great country.

I can say to the people back home in Saskatoon that the Conservative Party has a positive vision for this country, for Canada. We have a plan that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Conservatives, led by our leader, will fix what this costly NDP-Liberal coalition has broken. They do not have to worry. I will speak to the hopeful optimism that the leader of the Conservative Party is bringing to Canadians.

Privilege

Like I said, today is not a good day, and it is because, instead of being able to speak to the great things Conservatives would do for Canadians, we are once again stuck here in the quagmire of an NDP-Liberal scandal. With another NDP-Liberal scandal, I can imagine people flipping the switch and tuning out right now. Canadians have heard this record on repeat for 10 years. Actually, it has been much longer than that. It goes back even further. At this point, Canadians are quite jaded to the graft corruption and outright illegality of the Prime Minister and his cronies.

Before us today is a simple issue: The House asked the government to provide documents related to the green slush fund to the RCMP because we are suspicious that the Liberals have been taking taxpayers' money and giving it to their friends and supporters. The government provided some documents but decided to black out much of the relevant data.

The Speaker's office ruled that the Liberals were wrong and had violated the rules of the House, so now the Liberals would rather gridlock Parliament than provide the blacked out information. There must be some nasty surprises lurking in those documents. I also want to remind everyone in the House that the Liberals could end their filibuster of Parliament by simply releasing the documents, but they seem to want to fight this one to the end. Again, I am curious to know what they are hiding.

This is history on repeat to many folks. It certainly is to me. I stand here in the House of Commons as a Conservative member of Parliament, but I must say that I have not always been partisan. Most of my adult life, I did my civic duty, just like most Canadians. I would look at the candidates running for election and then mark my ballot. I would pick my MP based on the leader who I thought would make the best prime minister, the party that had the best policy items and the local candidate who would best represent me in the House. Then I would go home and repeat that process four years later. That was it.

Then, the 1990s occurred, and the Liberal government members at that time did what they always did, which was to become arrogant and out of touch. It is so important to understand that Liberals behave a certain way. Just like the prior Liberal government collapsed in a pile of corruption, it appears that the current Liberal government is moving the same way, this time helped by the NDP. Twenty-five years ago, the Liberal corruption was a billion dollars wasted on a long-gun registry that was useless and ineffective; Jean Chrétien using his influence as the then prime minister to ensure that money flowed to a hotel owner in his riding, in a scandal known as Shawinigate; the billion-dollar boondoggle; and the even more staggering sponsorship scandal. These are the Liberal corruption scandals that convinced me that it was time to stop just marking my ballot and to take a keen interest in the workings of our government.

It appears that here again we have a story of Liberal corruption, but it is important to put it in context. One of the most egregious examples of Liberal mismanagement in our nation's history, the billion-dollar boondoggle, occurred in the 1990s under the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien. It was not a small oversight or an isolated mistake. It was systemic incompetence that cost Canadians over a billion dollars, money that was supposed to be used to create jobs and help hard-working families.

At the heart of that scandal was Human Resources Development Canada. An internal audit revealed that over a billion dollars in grants had been handed out without proper paperwork, oversight or accountability. Grant applications were incomplete or non-existent, and approvals were given based on politics, not on the quality of the application. Essentially, public money was being given out to Liberal insiders and supporters as a reward, the kind of corruption we expect to see in a third-world dictatorship, not in Canada. That was my introduction to the Liberal Party, the first time I really paid attention to politics. Billions of dollars had been funnelled into pet projects, wasted with no oversight and with no one held responsible. Canadians were promised better job opportunities and stronger communities. What did they get? A scandal that reeked of corruption and incompetence, with taxpayers left holding the bag.

Soon after came another dark chapter in our country's history of Liberal corruption, which was the infamous sponsorship scandal, also known as ad scam. This scandal represents one of the clearest examples of why Canadians can never trust the Liberal Party to responsibly handle their hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

● (1230)

In the early 2000s, an investigation revealed that, under the Chrétien Liberal government, millions of dollars were funnelled into a corrupt scheme under the guise of a national unity program. This sponsorship program, supposedly designed to promote Canadian unity in Quebec, became nothing more than a cash machine for Liberal-friendly ad firms and well-connected insiders. Public money was funnelled through advertising agencies that had close ties to the Liberal Party.

These companies received millions for doing next to nothing, and then conveniently donated a portion of that money back to the Liberal Party. This was a government caught red-handed using taxpayers' money to grease the palms of its political friends while Canadians were left paying the bills. Fortunately, Canadians saw through this and elected a Conservative government to clean up the mess. Does this sound familiar?

We know the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparency. That is why we are committed to fixing the damage caused by these corrupt and wasteful practices. Billion-dollar boondoggles and sponsorship scandals are what happens when the Liberals are in charge. There is waste, fraud and scandal. Let me remind the House that this is the same Liberal Party that continues to throw around billions in unchecked spending, all while raising taxes on the very people we are supposed to serve.

Privilege

Conservative governments believe in fiscal responsibility, transparency and in being careful stewards of the hard-earned tax dollars of Canadians. We will not tolerate waste and mismanagement. It is time to axe the tax, fix the budget and put an end to the reckless spending habits of the Liberal government once and for all.

Sometimes we forget the impact the decisions made in the House have on Canadian people. The waste and graft that occurs through the Liberal mismanagement of public dollars impacts people in a very real way. Last week when I was home, I was reminded of this when I met somebody that has been impacted by this.

Stan Holcomb, born near Viscount, Saskatchewan, overcame the loss of his left leg to become an exceptional athlete and prosthetist. Raised on a family farm, he thrived in sports, learning to skate and swim with a prosthetic leg. In 1971, Stan joined the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, launching a 43-year career in prosthetics, and began competing in wheelchair sports.

He represented Canada in the 1976 Paralympics and was integral in founding the Canadian Amputee Sports Association and Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing. A passionate volunteer, he remains an avid golfer and dedicated sports supporter. A fixture in the Saskatoon community, Stan's dedication to hard work, personal responsibility and traditional values align closely with his Conservative principles.

Over the years, he has been an advocate for local causes and has remained committed to strengthening his community through volunteer work, youth sports and his unwavering belief in the values that have helped shape his life and career. Stan will be inducted into the Saskatoon Sports Hall of Fame on November 2, and it is no wonder.

Stan's beliefs and values are shared by all Conservatives and many Canadians. It is people like Stan who feel the pain of Liberal corruption. People like Stan end up paying the price of this corruption. When people get frustrated with the corruption, it leads to a change in government, like what happened in 2006 with the election of Stephen Harper's Conservative government.

The last time Canadians called in the Conservatives to clean up the Liberal mess, a great many things were accomplished. One of the ways Stephen Harper's government cleaned up the last Liberal mess was the Federal Accountability Act, which brought in new anti-corruption laws. We also created the independent office of the Ethics Commissioner and established the lobbyist registry. One of our proudest accomplishments was the creation of the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have managed to find ways around all of these safeguards. It is almost like they have a special department in the Prime Minister's office dedicated to finding ways to skirt the rules.

What is the latest scandal that is paralyzing the House right now? It is the green slush fund scandal. It follows a typical Liberal pattern. The government decides that it needs a way to reward its friends and supporters by funnelling money to them. Then it finds a legitimate program tasked with dispersing vast amounts of money. In this case, it was a program to fund environmental projects. The government then encourages all of its friends to apply on the

promise that they will be approved, regardless of the actual value of what is being done, and most do not do much of anything. Then the money flows and, boy, does it flow.

After that, the Liberals get caught. In this case, it was the Auditor General who investigated and ultimately found 400 million dollars of spending that was at risk and hundreds of conflicts of interest. Now we are trying to get Canadians the accountability that they deserve, but the government refuses to provide the documents to the RCMP. Here we are, and I will remind the House that the government and the NDP-Liberals could end this right now by providing these documents to the RCMP.

• (1235)

What is the legacy of the NDP-Liberal costly coalition? It takes what is good and wonderful and blows it up. The Prime Minister, when he was simply the leader of the Liberal Party in 2015, ran an election campaign on the promise of blowing up Stephen Harper's legacy of achievement. To his credit, that promise made was a promise kept. It is perhaps the only promise the Prime Minister has ever kept, and it was the one to destroy everything good about Canada. He sure made good on that one, did he not?

Is there accountability in government? Not anymore. Are there people going to prison for committing violent crimes? Not anymore. Is the government treating taxpayer dollars with respect? Not anymore. Is the Prime Minister pitting one group of Canadians against another while they fight for table scraps? Yes. Indeed, he does that every day.

Whatever the NDP-Liberals can do to hurt Canadians and make them lash out at their neighbour, I assure members they will do that. Every single wedge issue they can find, they will use. Integrity, honesty, trust and truthfulness are all foreign concepts to that lot.

How do they fill the void when they have no values? They fill the void with deficits, deceit and drugs. These are the disastrous ideals driving the NDP-Liberal coalition. After nearly a decade of its reckless policies, we are seeing the devastating consequences of the deficits, the deceit and the failure to address the drug crisis.

Privilege

First, the NDP-Liberals have run up record deficits, driving our national debt to unprecedented levels. Their out-of-control spending has fuelled inflation and made life unaffordable for countless Canadians. From rising grocery bills to soaring mortgage rates, Canadian families are struggling to make ends meet, all while the government continues to pour billions into misguided programs. These deficits are not just numbers on a balance sheet. They represent higher taxes, increased borrowing costs and a future burden on our children and our grandchildren.

The government's deceit has been just as harmful. The NDP-Liberals continue to claim that they are helping Canadians, but the truth is that they are making life harder. Time and again, they have promised transparency and accountability, yet they have consistently misled Canadians. Whether it is their failure to balance a budget or their mishandling of public funds, Canadians have every right to be outraged by the government's dishonesty.

We must also talk about the drug crisis. The NDP-Liberal government's approach to drug addiction has failed to keep our communities safe. Its so-called harm reduction policies have done nothing to curb addictions or support recovery. Instead, they have enabled dangerous drug use, leading to more deaths and an increase in crime across our communities. Canadians deserve better. A Conservative government would restore fiscal responsibility, put an end to deceitful policies and tackle the drug crisis, with a focus on recovery, treatment and community safety. It is time for real leadership that puts Canadians first.

Before Canadians are able to bring it home with real Conservative leadership, perhaps we need a reminder of why we are here today. Rampant corruption is the defining feature of the NDP-Liberal costly coalition. Let us dive right into these scandals: the so-called green slush fund, the arrive scam, the WE Charity scandal, the SNC-Lavalin affair and the Prime Minister's secretive trip to the Aga Khan's private island.

Let us start with the so-called green slush fund. As I said, it was under the guise of tackling climate change that the NDP-Liberal government used a fund that had little to do with real environmental action and more to do with lining the pockets of its well-connected friends. The Liberals funnelled billions of dollars into this fund without proper oversight or accountability. The real purpose was to have a way to funnel taxpayer dollars to their friends and allies. This misuse of taxpayer money is a betrayal of trust, particularly when Canadians are facing high inflation, rising energy costs and unaffordable housing. This is not in dispute. The Liberals themselves closed the whole thing down once the Auditor General shone a light on their corruption and deceit.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve a government that is honest, transparent and focused on real solutions, not on political gains.

Next, we have the ArriveCAN debacle, better known as the arrive scam. The government spent \$54 million on an app that should have cost a fraction of that amount. When questioned, the Liberals could not even explain where the money went. ArriveCAN was supposed to make border entry smoother during the pandemic but instead it turned into a costly, unnecessary fiasco. Not only was the app riddled with glitches, causing confusion and chaos for trav-

ellers, but it also became clear that most of the money spent went to well-connected contractors rather than to the development of the app itself.

How did an app like ArriveCAN, which was later deemed unnecessary, cost \$54 million? While Canadians struggled during the pandemic, the NDP-Liberal government was busy wasting millions on a failed app. Instead of owning up to its mistakes, it tried to shift the blame and avoid accountability. This is not leadership. This is corruption.

We then have the infamous WE Charity scandal. In 2020, the Liberal government handed nearly a billion-dollar contract to the WE Charity, an organization with close ties to the Prime Minister's family. This was supposed to be a program to help students during the pandemic, but it quickly unravelled when it became clear that this was yet another example of the Prime Minister using his office to benefit those close to him.

• (1240)

Multiple members of the Prime Minister's family, including his wife and brother, received payments from WE Charity, which raised serious questions about conflicts of interest. This is a clear violation of ethical standards, but instead of coming clear, the Prime Minister and his cabinet doubled down, refusing to take responsibility for their actions. The WE Charity scandal not only wasted taxpayer money, but also showed the extent to which the government is willing to go to enrich its friends and allies. The Ethics Commissioner found that the Prime Minister broke conflict of interest rules again, and once again there were no real consequences. Canadians deserve better.

Next up is the SNC-Lavalin affair, a scandal that shook the foundations of our democracy. In 2019, it came to light that the Prime Minister and his inner circle attempted to interfere in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, a Quebec-based engineering firm accused of bribery and corruption. When then attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould refused to bend to the Prime Minister's will, he retaliated by removing her from her role, demonstrating that the government prioritizes political favours over principles.

This is a direct attack on the rule of law in Canada. The Prime Minister and the government were willing to bend the rules, pressure the former attorney general and undermine the justice system, all to protect a corporation with deep political connections. This scandal was not just about SNC-Lavalin. It was about the lengths to which the Liberals would go to protect their own interests. It showed a complete disregard for the rule of law and an alarming willingness to interfere in the justice system for political gain. This is corruption at the highest levels, and Canadians deserve better.

Finally, let us talk about the Prime Minister's secretive trip. In 2017, it was revealed that the Prime Minister accepted a lavish vacation on the private island of the Aga Khan, a billionaire whose foundation receives millions in funding from the Canadian government. This was a blatant conflict of interest, and the Ethics Commissioner ruled that the Prime Minister had violated the Conflict of Interest Act. Despite this, there were no real consequences, and the Prime Minister brushed off the scandal as a misunderstanding. However, make no mistake: This was no simple misunderstanding. It was yet another example of the Prime Minister using his position of power for personal gain while ignoring the ethical standards that should guide all public officials.

Canadians expect their leaders to lead by example, to be transparent and to put the interests of the country ahead of their own. However, time and again, the Liberal Prime Minister has shown that he is more interested in helping his friends, bending the rules and avoiding accountability. Canadians are tired of the corruption, the scandals and the excuses. All of these scandals show a pattern of deceit, mismanagement and ethical violations from the NDP-Liberal government. It has betrayed the trust of Canadians and has proven time and again that it cannot be trusted to govern with integrity.

A Conservative government will put an end to this corruption. It will restore accountability, transparency and ethical leadership to Ottawa. Canadians deserve a government that works for them, not one that is mired in scandal and focused on enriching its friends. It is time to clean up the mess, restore integrity and bring real leadership back to Canada.

The time for excuses and corruption is over. Canadians are tired of a government that puts political insiders ahead of hard-working families. We need real leadership, not more scandals, waste and deceit. That is why we must hold a carbon tax election. We need an election to axe the carbon tax, which drives up the cost of living, making gas, groceries and heating unaffordable for millions of Canadians.

We need to build homes, not bureaucracy. Families are struggling to find affordable housing, and the NDP-Liberal government's policies have only made it worse. A Conservative government will fix this by empowering builders, cutting red tape and ensuring more homes are built faster to meet the needs of Canadians.

We must also fix the budget. Nine years of reckless Liberal spending, like the green slush fund, have driven up inflation, and Canadians are paying the price, with higher interest rates, less purchasing power and ballooning national debt. A Conservative government will restore fiscal responsibility, balance the budget and bring down inflation to help all Canadians.

Privilege

We need to stop the crime that is plaguing our communities. Under the NDP-Liberal government, crime rates are rising, and its soft-on-crime approach has failed. A Conservative government will restore safety and order and bring order to our streets by enforcing tougher penalties and supporting law enforcement.

The next election will be about restoring common sense in government. It will be about bringing home lower taxes, affordable homes, fiscal responsibility and safe streets. It is time to end the corruption and bring home a government that works for the people. Let us bring it home.

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member was reflecting on history, let me remind him of another history. There were 70 abuses of power by Stephen Harper, 31 of them scandals, corruption and contempt. The current leader of the Conservative-Reform party, who was the parliamentary secretary to Stephen Harper, does not even want to get the security clearance necessary to deal with the issue of foreign interference. This is very much a hot topic in Canada.

Why does the leader of the Conservative Party refuse to get a security clearance? What in his past might cause it to be denied? Is the member opposite aware of anything that would prevent the leader of the Conservative Party from being able to get a security clearance? Is that why he is not applying for it?

• (1250)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, that is a new one. It is very clear the Liberals are doing everything they can to avoid talking about the subject we are talking about today. They are trying so hard to hide behind other issues because they do not want to face the reality of the corruption in their party, in the government and among the people who are part of the government.

I will play along a bit. Last week, we heard there were names of parliamentarians from different parties, from the Liberal Party and from wherever else supposedly, but we did not hear the names. My challenge to the member opposite is to release the names. They are not secret. If there are names, release them. I think there is some doubt about whether there are names, and until they are released, we do not know if there are.

If there is evidence that they exist, they should be shared with the public. There is no reason not to share them, and I challenge him to do that.

Privilege

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking today about a privilege motion on the government's refusal to release documents as ordered by Parliament. I want to thank my colleague for mentioning some of the scandals that the government is mired in right now.

Let us not overlook ArriveCAN. I note that the government operations committee, the mighty OGGO, unanimously demanded documents from the government on the ArriveCAN scandal. In the production order, the committee sent for, in an unredacted format, the list of contractors and subcontractors and so on. Internal results released on the ATIP request to the government said to apply the spirit of the ATIP Act and provide any redactions that should be made. The government said that this was not an ATIP request, but there was some information that it did not want made public. It also said that if documents are redacted too much, it is recommended that those documents not be released at all.

This is another example of the government refusing an order to produce documents, this time to a committee, covering up the ArriveCAN scandal. I wonder if my colleague could comment on the government's insistence on, in this case, refusing to honour an order of Parliament to release documents.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is sad that we see this happening over and over again. The example the member raised is a really good one.

I thought it was interesting that the internal email thread basically said that if the Liberals released this information, it could be really bad for them, so they tried hard not to do it. I am sure that email thread has happened on many occasions, including this one. There are many examples. I have seen others in other parts of my work, in immigration and elsewhere, where tremendously important pieces of information that have been asked for have not been responded to, or documents have been very liberally blacked out to hide information that would implicate the government or members of the government in bad things, including potentially criminal things.

We see this over and over again. It is a practice of the government. It is a practice, as I said in my speech, of the Liberals that goes way back to as far as I can remember. We need to stop this. We need a change in government, and we need a government that applies good ethics and good practices to the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a rather sinister spectacle has been unfolding over the past two weeks as the Liberals and the Conservatives play their partisan games. Meanwhile, work on behalf of Canadians has come to a standstill.

I would like to ask my Conservative colleague a very specific question. We, the NDP, managed to force the government to provide dental care to seniors. If his party comes to power, will it keep the existing dental care program or take it away from Canada's seniors?

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting question but is completely off of today's subject. It is something I would have expected from the Liberals, but perhaps the NDP is also trying to hide something. I do not know what is going on here.

It is a very interesting situation. The reality of it, though, is that the whole event that is going on, this whole discussion and debate, could end immediately if the government just presented the unredacted documents to the RCMP. That is what we are trying to do. We do not want the government to run away from this. We want it to have to face the consequences of what it has done. That is what we are asking for. The Liberals can end it today; it is in their control.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the Conservatives. The government's refusal to produce the documents requested by Parliament is unacceptable. However, the Conservatives have done the same thing in the past. In fact, under Mr. Harper, the Conservative government fell on that very issue.

Has my colleague given any thought to ways of preventing this kind of situation from happening again? Would he be willing to accept suggestions on how to do so?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, there is a really simple solution to this, and that is a change of government. Of course, all of us on this side are eagerly working hard for Canadians to that end.

If members can believe it, I did not have enough time in my speech to go through all of the scandals. I only picked out some of the big ones, but there are others I want to briefly mention.

There was "elbowgate" in the House with MP Ruth Ellen Brosseau. There was the India trip, which I did not mention. With SNC-Lavalin, there was another issue: Employees who had been donating to the Liberal Party were being reimbursed by the company. There was, of course, the blackface scandal. There was the Governor General's spending scandal. There was the former ethics commissioner, who was sister-in-law to one of the Liberal ministers. There was also the \$6,000-a-night hotel in London.

I could go on, but I am running out of time. There are so many things to talk about.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nobody has ever accused the hon. member of not fully understanding the facts. While he wants to dismiss the hon. member from the NDP caucus, it was the NDP, at committee, that uncovered the corruption happening with one of the board members. I know that because I was the member. The notion that somehow we are in the cover-up is not only ridiculous, but is another example of the way the member chooses not to understand the facts.

The fact is that the Conservative Party wrote a motion to send this to PROC. The Conservatives are banking on their base being too stupid to understand the procedural shenanigans they are doing in the House. Given that, will the hon. member finally have at least the courtesy and dignity to stand up, come clean with Canadians and send this to committee so we can get on with the good work, or does he not understand—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is quite rich for a member of the NDP to talk about how virtuous they are with regard to holding the government to account. The New Democrats have voted with the government to prop it up. They have voted for budgets hundreds of times. They are in a coalition. They have shut down debate in the House at the request of their Liberal masters. When the Liberals say “jump”, the NDP asks, “How high?” That is how this has gone for nine years, and people know the truth of that.

These documents need to be given to the RCMP. They need to be unredacted and need to be produced. That could end the whole debate right now.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the SDTC scandal. The organization had a key mandate. It was federally funded, non-profit and approved to disburse over \$100 million in funds annually to clean-technology companies. Sustainable Development Technology Canada was established in 2001 by the Government of Canada through the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act to fund the development and demonstration of new technologies that promote sustainable development.

It was to be an arm's-length, not-for-profit organization, created to support projects that developed and demonstrated new technologies addressing issues related to climate change, air quality, clean water and clean soil. Clearly, it must have functioned quite well until around 2017-18, when the government changed hands and it fell under the responsibility of our Liberal government; actually, the Liberal government. I have trouble saying “our” because I do not feel it is representing me or my riding.

In 2018, former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains expressed concerns regarding the Harper-era chair of SDTC, Jim Balsillie, given his public criticism of government privacy legislation. The minister's office expressed its discomfort about Mr. Balsillie's comments to the CEO of SDTC, and Mr. Bains requested that the chair stop criticizing government legislation. At that point, the minister proposed two alternative chairs to the CEO of SDTC as replacements, in a phone call.

One of the candidates proposed was Annette Verschuren, an entrepreneur who was receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies. The minister, the PMO and the PCO were warned of the risks associated with appointing a conflicted chair and were told that, up until that point, the fund had never had a chair with interests in companies receiving funding from SDTC.

It sounds like it was run well with proper oversight. However, in June 2019, former minister Bains decided to proceed with the appointment of Ms. Verschuren despite repeated warnings expressed at his office. The new chair went on to create an environment where conflicts of interest were tolerated and managed by board members.

Privilege

Board members went on to award SDTC funding to companies they held stock or positions in. Former minister Bains went on to appoint two other controversial board members who engaged in unethical behaviour, in breach of the Conflict of Interest Act, by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership stakes.

This is beyond the pale for Canadians. They are at the point where they wonder if there is anything the current government does that does not serve itself or those who are part of its larger group. ISED officials witnessed 186 conflicts at the board, but they did not intervene.

In January 2021, the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain became the new Minister of Industry, replacing Navdeep Bains after his decision not to run for re-election. Mr. Bains, I guess, felt that would be a wise decision on his part.

In November 2022, whistle-blowers raised internal concerns with the Auditor General about unethical practices that were taking place. The Privy Council was briefed by the whistle-blowers about the allegations shortly after, and it commissioned two independent reports.

In September 2023, the whistle-blowers took the allegations public, and the minister agreed, finally, to suspend SDTC funding. Things were a mess.

In November 2023, the Auditor General announced an audit, and in June 2024, the Auditor General's report was released, finding severe government failures. The Auditor General and Ethics Commissioner initiated these separate investigations after whistle-blowers came forward with allegations of financial mismanagement at the fund. I have to say, it is an amazing thing when people are willing to put their reputations, their lives and their futures on the line because they see something like this taking place within the government. I applaud them for making that decision and for moving forward with that.

• (1300)

I am going to take a moment here to share some of the words from the whistle-blower that were shared as committee testimony:

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....

I know that the federal government, like the minister, has continued saying that there was no criminal intent and nothing was found, but I think the committee would agree that they're not to be trusted on this situation.

What a sad comment to be made of a government that is responsible for Canadian taxpayers' dollars.

Privilege

I would happily agree to whatever the findings are by the RCMP, but I would say that I wouldn't trust that there isn't any criminality unless the RCMP is given full authority to investigate.

Of course, my colleagues on this side of the House and I could not agree more.

I don't think we should leave it to the current federal government or the ruling party to make those decisions.

Obviously, there is an incredible lack of trust among our public servants who are responsible for working with these organizations that they see clearly are being abused by the federal government.

Just as I was always confident that the Auditor General would confirm the financial mismanagement...I remain equally confident that the RCMP will substantiate the criminal activities that occurred within the organization.

There is one more that I think is really important. It really hit me when I read what he said:

The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government, whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up their findings over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference.

The political interference level of the Liberal-NDP government, I think, is beyond anything in the history of Canada. We are dealing with internal political interference and international interference under the current government's watch.

It should never have taken two years for the issues to reach this point. What should have been a straightforward process turned into a bureaucratic nightmare that allowed SDTC to continue wasting millions of [taxpayer] dollars and abusing countless employees over the last year.

That really hit me, of course, the wasting of Canadian taxpayer dollars, especially when it is related to supposedly doing things that would improve our environment. The government cannot get off its need to tax Canadians with the carbon tax because of the work that needs to be done to make sure our country and our world are sustainable for the next generations. In the meantime, it is taking those exact dollars set aside for green technologies and improvements and giving them quietly to companies that have ulterior motives for that money and no intention of using it for supposed environmental processes.

When Canadians who are paying that carbon tax are not getting back what they have put into it, and are facing higher costs for fuel, food, housing and everything because of the added down-the-line costs of that carbon tax, we know where it is leading Canadians. We know how desperate they are in wanting a new future for Canada, which, of course, will come when the Conservative Party of Canada has the incredible honour of forming government soon.

On the second part, the "abusing [of] countless employees over the last year", the government talks about how much it appreciates the people behind the scenes, and the high quality of people who serve the government. Here we have an individual talking about how it abused countless employees. This speaks to a government that is not a servant but rather a master, determining that what it wants will happen. It is the government's way or the highway and who is in the way does not matter; it is willing to throw them under the bus.

● (1305)

There are so many violations here of Canadians' trust. My colleague from Saskatoon West spoke of many other issues the government has been part of, all the way back to the ad scam and up to the WE challenge. There are just so many. I have one myself that I cannot help but recall, which really hit me as a new member of Parliament when I had the opportunity to speak for the first time to an issue in the House of Commons.

It was a bill brought forward by the federal government to be discussed. It was actually the first debate I participated in that sought to remove the government's accountability to the House. It was in regard to an environmental framework, and the bill sought to give sweeping power to the minister and accountability to an advisory board.

I was somewhat concerned about this. I had not heard a lot about this approach, so I asked the individual who had spoken, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, about this board: what it was supposed to look like, how it would function, how many people would be on it, where they would come from, what their qualifications and credentials would be, what their mandate would be and all of these types of questions. We were at the beginning of discussing the potential of this bill and wanting to give good feedback on what we thought was appropriate or not.

That member stood up and immediately was so pleased to say that the board had already been chosen. We were in the first hours of debate, and the deal was done. This gives just a bit of an example of how the government really does not care about the elected people representing this country and how they are to function within the responsibilities of Parliament.

As I said, so many violations have been discussed throughout the day, in addition to the green slush fund, that I cannot help but notice how much Canadians' trust in this particular NDP-Liberal coalition, and in government in general and many of our institutions, is waning. Canadians are very discouraged because they see these ethical violations taking place over and over again on that side of the floor, yet the government has no sense of having to apologize or to change its behaviour on behalf of Canadians.

Abusing employees is something else. The Liberals enabled the SDTC to give funds to those who should not have received those funds. I cannot help but think it is a very good thing we made the decision to request that these papers get to the RCMP so that criminality can be explored.

Then there is the question of financial management. People say we can give the benefit of the doubt the first time we hear of an error. I believe the new minister even said, "As soon as we heard, we acted." Well, two years later, it is the result of whistle-blowers that we are here dealing with this today.

Privilege

Are the Liberals not capable of running the government in a respectful, transparent way that makes proper use of Canadian tax dollars? Are they not capable, or are they just indifferent? Here the Liberals are, in places of power, and not truly giving proper oversight to the departments they are responsible for. That speaks not only to indifference but to the potential for being incapable of doing their job and of ensuring their departments are being run properly.

• (1310)

Then there is the third thing, and I think this is the one that is now so obvious to Canadians, which is that of a very self-serving agenda. That it is not about Canadians and is not about serving Canadians, but is about Liberals serving themselves and their friends and being focused on political gain at all costs rather than doing the right thing for Canadians.

The Auditor General's report showed that over \$400 million, over the five-year audit period, had been awarded to projects that either should not have been eligible or was awarded to projects in which the board members were conflicted. A preschooler could understand the importance of doing this properly. If the Liberal government knew these are the things that were expected in these roles, it would see very clearly that this did not match that.

On the part about speaking about indifference and self-serving, I want to follow it up with a quote I have used before that speaks to the very essence of what we are hearing in this circumstance and in so many other conflicts by the government, which is, "It's hard not to feel disappointed in your government when every day there is a new scandal." These are the words of the Prime Minister, as the member for Papineau, when he was in opposition.

Liberals have said a lot that we Conservatives cannot blame them because we did the same thing. This is not true.

An hon. member: Why not?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: We will get into that.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's words absolutely ring true today.

After nine years of scandal, corruption and Liberal entitlement, the business of the House has been put on hold to discuss this scandal of monumental proportions and to request and demand what should be done by the government, which is to simply release those documents, as the government has been required to do by this place by the vote of the membership of the House, who have the right to demand those documents be presented unredacted. The documents should not be presented in piecemeal, but be presented as required.

As the Speaker of the House indicated, the government was not doing that. Those documents need to be shared and they need to be provided to the RCMP so that the proper work can be done, work that respects Canadians' intelligence, their hearts and their love for this country, as well as their tax dollars.

I want to comment on a couple more things. The Auditor General gave SDTC a clean bill of health in 2017. What does that say? It was only after the Prime Minister's hand-picked Liberal board members were appointed that this fund began voting itself absurd

amounts of taxpayer dollars, and it is not arm's length from the government.

The minister recommended board appointments, and ISED had senior department officials sitting in on every meeting monitoring the activities of the board and doing nothing about it. It is unbelievable that a senior department official would say nothing while witnessing how many millions of dollars were funnelled to companies in which board members held conflicts of interest.

I will end with one more quote. Basically, the Prime Minister himself, in 2016, was saying how proud he was to be the Prime Minister, which meant first servant of Canadians. However, he also made the point of saying that Canada was "the first postnational state", which to me was a very serious comment that basically indicated he was not concerned about Canada and what it is. He was not concerned about its sovereignty, but it was a post-national state that he was prepared to run into the ground for his own ideological purposes.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative reformers across the way need to better understand why Stephen Harper was the only Prime Minister in the history of Canada who was found in contempt. Why is that relevant? Think of the character of the current leader of the Conservatives. Their current leader was the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister back then.

Why would someone not understand why it is important that the leader of the Conservative Party is saying that he does not want to get the security clearance so he can get more information about members of Parliament? Maybe the member can provide her response to this quote by Wesley Wark, who has advised both Liberal and Conservative governments on national security issues, who said that the "Tory leader is knowingly misleading the public by claiming he doesn't need the security clearance because his chief of staff has received briefings."

The leader of the Conservative Party is playing games with Canadians. When is the game going to stop, and when will he be getting that security clearance?

• (1320)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the member across the floor is playing games. That is the bottom line.

Here is the thing. Who is in contempt of court? It is the NDP-Liberal coalition. It is time to give those papers to the House and the RCMP. The Liberals should do their job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did a good job of taking up a lot of time in the House of Commons to say that the documents must be handed over. I am going to share something that should not be a news flash. We all agree on that, and we are ready to vote to force the government to hand over those documents.

Privilege

Could she let me know when the Conservatives will be ready to vote? I think everyone could be ready today or tomorrow. We are ready. The vote will pass. The Bloc Québécois will support the Conservatives on this.

Are they ready to vote on this?

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, what we are requesting and what we expect is for the government do the right thing and hand over those documents.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that struck me was the word “self-serving”. There are many examples, but one that comes to mind is one of the board members receiving a quarter of a million dollars for her companies. The Minister for Environment and Climate Change was a lobbyist for them, has shares in a company and met with the PM’s office a dozen times before getting elected.

I wonder if the member would comment a bit more on that, as far as the almost self-serving, incestuous relationship that the Liberals seem to have with the slush fund.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment continually chides people about the need for the carbon tax and the reason the carbon tax has to go up and up, to the point where it is basically debilitating Canadians in being able to function in their homes and run their businesses.

All of the things that Canadians need to do are being impacted by this carbon tax, yet this individual has personally gained in those circumstances and this slush fund has handed out millions of Canadian tax dollars to companies that are not eligible for the funds and are not even doing anything specific to improve the environment, something very important to me, my constituents and the whole province of Saskatchewan. We have been concerned about the Canadian environment as a whole and certainly where we work and play.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l’Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have asked two or three times now what could be done to prevent this kind of situation from ever happening again. This does not seem to be of any interest to the Conservatives.

The Conservatives have also been reprimanded for refusing to table documents at Parliament’s request. We agree that the Liberals are no better.

What guarantee do we have that the Conservatives will not do the same thing after a few years in power if they form government?

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, it was the Conservative government that created the first Federal Accountability Act. Can members imagine where we would be today if it had not put the things in place that it did? Those things apply as much to Conservatives, when we form government, as anyone who has that privilege and responsibility.

I am very proud of the leader of my party, who has made it clear that “prime minister” means “first servant”. As a caucus, when

Conservatives form government, we will hold each other accountable. That is what Conservatives do and that certainly will be our responsibility. We will continue to make sure that what happens in this place is done ethically and in Canadians’ best interests.

• (1325)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a straightforward question. For the last three weeks, the Conservatives have framed the situation as being solely a partisan issue from a Liberal insider who, I agree, received favourable treatment and self-dealings and acted in a corrupt way.

However, would the hon. member care to comment on the fact that the same person in question, Annette Verschuren, donated to the Conservative Party as recently as March 24, 2022? This is a situation where not only is the person a Liberal insider, but a Conservative insider as well. Does the hon. member care to comment or do Conservatives seem to have amnesia on that fact as well?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I do not care who gives money where; they do not have a right to break the law.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had members from the member opposite’s ranks today say, “Tell us the names of the 11 MPs dealing with foreign interference.”

If he were to get security clearance, the leader of the Conservative Party could go and get the names. However, unlike the leader of the Bloc, the leader of the Green Party, the leader of the NDP and obviously the Prime Minister, he has chosen to be blind on the issue.

Can the member justify why the leader of the Conservative Party feels it is appropriate to play games with Canadians on this important issue?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the one playing games is the person across the floor.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is rife with corruption. For those at home wondering, this is one of three green-related scandals going on right now: Of course, there is the green slush fund; there is one involving the environment department giving out millions in grants to massive corporations without any oversight or governance; and also the net-zero accelerator, where the government gave out \$8 billion to wealthy foreign corporations that were not eligible for the money.

I wonder if my colleague could tell us what it says about the government, that it has so many scandals going on that it has subsets of subsets of subsets of scandals.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, here is what I would say: Somebody needs to write a book, or at least document, maybe do a movie someday, I do not know.

I do not think the Liberals have any item of business in this House that is not somehow impacted by their choices to focus on self and those that support them, rather than do what is best for Canadians. I can hardly wait until we have the opportunity to change government.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not mean to be pre-empting anybody in this place, but because I do not know if I will be on my feet in this place tomorrow, I do want to say something quickly.

Tomorrow is October 22. It was 10 years ago tomorrow that I and a handful of people, who still remain in this place, had the unfortunate scenario of being locked down in the House of Commons. I was in the reading room of the Conservative caucus with former prime minister Stephen Harper when a gunman killed Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the National War Memorial and then proceeded into this place. I know that there will be people commenting about this, but I want to give my continued condolences to the family of Patrice Vincent, the warrant officer who was killed a few days earlier, and to the family of Nathan Cirillo.

I am also thankful for the continued work of our Parliamentary Protective Services. It was not that way then; in fact, the contingent was reorganized after that incident. However, I want thank J.J. Frankie, who was the security guard in our caucus room that day, and Constable Son, who actually took a bullet that day. I want to thank all the Protective Services. As a hunter, I knew exactly what I heard outside the doors of that caucus room. In the almost 19 years of doing this job, I do not remember every single day, but I remember that day.

I rise today to speak to a motion of privilege put forward by my Conservative colleague following the government's refusal to hand over all documents related to the Prime Minister's green slush fund to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In my 18-plus years as a parliamentarian in the House, I have understood that breaches of privilege of parliamentarians is a serious matter, however, it seems that the current Liberal government does not share that same understanding. The Liberal government has ignored the will of Parliament and Canadians once again.

I will go back and summarize this latest act of corruption by the Liberal government with a quick review of the timeline.

In late 2018, the former industry minister expressed concerns regarding the chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, given that he had been publicly criticizing government legislation at the time. The then minister's office requested that the chair stop criticizing his government's legislation. The minister at the time, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office were warned of the risks associated with their desire to replace the chair with a proposed candidate who was receiving Sustainable Development Technology Canada funding through one of their companies, which was a clear conflict of interest.

In June 2019, the minister decided to proceed with the appointment of the conflicted chair, despite repeated warnings expressed to the minister's office. The new chair created an environment where conflicts of interest were tolerated and managed by board members.

Privilege

Board members then went on to award Sustainable Development Technology Canada funding to companies in which they themselves held stock or high-level positions within the companies that received the funding. Two additional appointed and controversial board members engaged in unethical behaviour in breach of the Conflict of Interest Act by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership stakes. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada officials witnessed 186 conflicts at the board but did not intervene.

In November 2022, whistle-blowers raised internal concerns with the Auditor General about unethical practices at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. The Privy Council was briefed by the whistle-blowers about the allegations shortly after the commission's two independent reports.

In September 2023, the whistle-blowers took the allegations public and the minister agreed to suspend Sustainable Development Technology Canada funding.

In November 2023, the Auditor General announced an audit of Sustainable Development Technology Canada. In June 2024, the Auditor General's report was released finding severe governance failures at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, and that brings us to where we are today.

On June 10, the House adopted a motion calling for the production of various documents related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada to be turned over to the RCMP for review. It was passed by a majority of members in the House.

● (1330)

In response to the motion adopted, departments either outright refused the House order or redacted documents were turned over, citing provisions of the Privacy Act or Access to Information Act in direct violation of the order that was voted on by a majority of members of the House. Nothing in that House order required redactions. The House enjoys the absolute and unfettered power to order the production of documents that is not limited by any statute. These powers are rooted in the Constitution Act of 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act.

In response to the failure to produce documents, my colleague, the Conservative House leader, raised a question of privilege, arguing that House privilege had been breached due to the failure to comply with the House's direct order.

On September 26, the ruling on this question of privilege found that the privilege of the House had indeed been breached, and the Conservatives have been fighting for the will of Canadians and to uphold the powers of the House in debate ever since.

The whistle-blower for Sustainable Development Technology Canada stated:

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...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

Privilege

The whistle-blower went on:

I know that the federal government, like the minister, has continued saying that there was no criminal intent and nothing was found, but I think the committee would agree that they're not to be trusted on this situation. I would happily agree to whatever the findings are by the RCMP, but I would say that I wouldn't trust that there isn't any criminality unless the RCMP is given full authority to investigate.

Full authority means that it has to have all of the facts, not just the facts that the government chooses to release in direct contravention of an order passed by the House. It is high time for the government to hand over the documents to the RCMP and for the RCMP itself to determine the criminal activity in the green slush fund scandal.

The whistle-blower continued, stating:

...I...[am] confident that the Auditor General would confirm the financial mismanagement at [Sustainable Development Technology Canada], I remain equally confident that the RCMP will substantiate the criminal activities that occurred within the organization.

...The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government, whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up their findings over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference. It should never have taken two years for the issues to reach this point. What should have been a straightforward process turned into a bureaucratic nightmare that allowed SDTC to continue wasting millions of dollars and abusing countless employees over the last year.

The Conservatives know that the current government remains more concerned about its own insiders, friends and ministers than the issues that are facing ordinary everyday Canadians. I could not have said it better myself than when the whistle-blower for this massive government overreach said, "I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation from being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like [Sustainable Development Technology Canada] in the public sphere."

It has become abundantly clear that after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost, crime or corruption, and the green slush fund scandal is just another scandal on the heap pile of the festering corruption of nine years of the government.

My Conservative colleagues and I prioritize the concept of responsible government in Canada. The government must answer to members as the representatives of the people and must be held accountable to Canadians who are suffering from the failed policies, actions and inflationary spending of the government.

In 2015, the Prime Minister set his core principles of open and accountable government as a central tenet of his office and the role of cabinet. For years, the actions of the Liberal government have broken promises for this motto and now has failed to explain to Canadians where \$400 million taxpayer dollars have gone under the green slush fund. Just to refresh everybody's memory, the \$40 million through the adscam was just one-tenth of what this scandal alone is.

• (1335)

The Prime Minister's own statement in "Open and Accountable Government" states:

Creating the culture of integrity and accountability that allows us to earn and keep the trust of Canadians will require constant attention and ongoing commitment

by all of us throughout our mandate. This guide will serve as an important reference as we strive to provide an open and accountable government for all Canadians.

How has that turned out? Broken promises, corruption and scandal are now known by millions of Canadians as the core principles and tenets of the Liberal government and its Prime Minister, rather than their so-called open and accountable government document. The Liberals never refer to it anymore.

The Speaker has ruled that the NDP-Liberal government has violated a House order to turn over evidence to the police for a criminal investigation in this scandal. It is time for some accountability, and it is time to show Canadians where their tax dollars are really going.

The Auditor General's findings reveal that Liberal appointees paid \$400 million to their own companies, involving not one, not two, not 10, not 50, not 100 but 186 conflicts of interest. Canada is struggling. Our country feels broken under the leadership of the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government.

Canadian families will spend \$700 more this year at the grocery store, and food banks have seen a 50% rise in visits since 2021, with two million Canadians a month visiting food banks. Life has never been less affordable and more expensive. At a time when Canadians are struggling with an impossible cost of living, the Liberal government continues to spend recklessly, funnelling taxpayer dollars to their friends and their insiders.

To summarize the facts and this serious breach of privilege, Sustainable Development Technology Canada was established in 2001 by the Government of Canada through the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act to fund the development and demonstration of new technologies that promote sustainable development. Sustainable Development Technology Canada is responsible for the administration of the SD tech fund in accordance with the guidelines of the funding agreement with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

In 2019, the former industry minister began appointing conflicted executives to the board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada. The board appointed by the Liberal government began voting companies in which executives held active conflicts of interest. The Auditor General and Ethics Commissioner initiated separate investigations after whistle-blowers came forward with allegations of financial mismanagement of the fund. The Auditor General's investigation finds severe gaps in governance standards and uncovers that \$400 million in Sustainable Development Technology Canada funding was awarded to projects in which board members, the ones making the decisions of the awards, were conflicted during the five-year audit period.

The government has opposed the opposition at every step of the way in getting these documents, trying to silence the will of parliamentarians in the House and avoid accountability to Canadians. The Liberals are trying to hide the \$390 million that has gone to Liberal insiders under this program. They continue to oppose this production order for important documents to be turned over to the RCMP.

The Prime Minister's personal department, the Privy Council Office, defied the order of the House to produce these documents and ordered departments to redact all sensitive information. The Prime Minister's office turned its back on Canadians by blacking out these documents. Canadians want to know what exactly the government is hiding. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Canada is facing corruption like we have never seen in my 18 years in the House.

The Conservatives have asked for these documents to hold the Liberal government to account. My voters in the riding of Red Deer—Lacombe have had enough and want answers. The government needs to answer for its corrupt actions and release these documents. The Liberal government is resisting and hiding these documents because it knows there is corruption that has yet to be revealed. If this were a private sector company, that company would be turning those documents over to police for immediate investigation.

This is our job, not the job of police to seek with the courts. It is our job to expose the corruption in the things we have authorized money for in this Parliament. It is our job, and it is time that the Liberal minister and the Prime Minister started caring about it.

● (1340)

The Auditor General found that Sustainable Development Technology Canada gave \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that, on occasions, could not demonstrate an environment of green technology. These projects had nothing to do with the mandate of the organization. There was \$334 million given to projects in which board members had conflicts of interest. In these cases, just a handful of board members managed to wind up in 186 conflicts of interest. We cannot make this stuff up.

There was \$58 million given to projects without ensuring that contribution agreement terms were met. In other words, where there were matching funds expected, there was no requirement for the matching funding to come, so we would just send out another \$60 million. Normally we would do due diligence and make sure that, before we released any taxpayers' funds, the matching funding would come. Who cares? It is just another rich day for Liberal insiders.

Even the Prime Minister's own government departments know that the Liberal government is not worth the corruption or the cost. A recording of a senior civil servant revealed the outright incompetence of the government, which gave 123 million dollars' worth of contracts inappropriately. The blame for this scandal clearly lies with the Prime Minister and his ministers of industry, who did not sufficiently monitor the contracts that were given to Liberal friends and insiders.

Privilege

In fact, just today, the Speaker tabled a further update from the legal clerk on the responses to the June 10 production order concerning Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It would not come as a surprise to anyone in this place that these documents from the departments of Finance and Industry, as well as the Treasury Board Secretariat, were heavily redacted or had pages withheld in their entirety. What a surprise it is that, even in the context of the debate in this place, the Liberal government is withholding information from Canadian taxpayers. This privilege ruling and the actions of the NDP-Liberal government have already paralyzed Parliament and made it impossible to address the serious issues facing Canadians, such as doubling housing costs, food inflation, crime and chaos.

I will just remind the viewers at home that this is not the first time we have actually been in this scenario. I hope the Speaker has good legal counsel because the precedent has already been set that, in the event that the House is adjourned, the Speaker could be facing legal consequences. The scandals are too numerous to mention. However, in just one of them, the Winnipeg lab scandal, the last Speaker tried to produce documents. The government was actually going to take the Speaker to court in order to cover up its accountability and its actions, or lack thereof, when it came to protecting Canada's sovereignty. Such are the lengths the government will go to.

I have news for government members about the lengths that Conservatives will go to in order to hold the government to account and to make sure that taxpayers are adequately informed about where their hard-earned dollars are going. We will continue this debate until the result that Canadians deserve and expect is produced, which is that the full, unredacted documents are disclosed here in Parliament and turned over to the RCMP so that we can pursue any criminality, if necessary, within Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

It is time for the Prime Minister to take accountability and provide these documents outlining the conflicts of interest of this green slush fund. Only common-sense Conservatives will end the corruption and get the answers that Canadians rightfully deserve.

● (1345)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one issue I was talking about earlier is one of the various green scandals that the government is mired in, which is the net accelerator. The Auditor General noted that \$8 billion had been given away to companies, many of which do not even qualify. Looking at it, I saw that one of the companies that received government funding is a company called Geely. It received \$15 million in subsidies. Geely is a Chinese-owned EV company, which is now, of course, subject to a 100% tariff on its cars.

Privilege

Could the member comment on the ridiculousness of using taxpayers' money to subsidize Chinese EVs at the same time as hitting them with 100% tariffs to stop them from bringing their cars into Canada?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, if someone ever wanted to hear a rhetorical question, that was one. This speaks to the broader issue of the profligacy of the government. It will spend money on anything it wants to put in a window to showcase. The government is all about virtue signalling, messaging, appearances and optics. It is not about good governance or making responsible decisions.

We see what the government has been about the whole time. Finally, after nine years, Canadians see it. The only way to find a path forward is to have these documents produced to the House and to the RCMP. If that is not going to happen, then the people of Canada should have their say in an election to decide whether they want to continue allowing the government to spend the way it spends and commit the corruption that it commits. I hope that a Conservative government will follow, restoring some sense of accountability and good governance to this once-proud country.

• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been discussing this issue for about two weeks now.

It seems pretty clear that everyone in the House agrees on this issue. The NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives agree. What we want to know is what we are accomplishing here.

Last week, a study in *La Presse* reported that the number of homeless people who have died on the streets of Quebec has tripled over the past five years. In Quebec, over the past five years, 200 people died on the streets in the cold. If we extrapolate, that means that in Canada as a whole, 700 to 800 people died on the streets. That is a direct result of the housing crisis, which we are currently not talking about in the House because we are wasting time discussing a motion that everyone agrees on. We agree on accountability. We agree on the need for more transparency. We are ready to vote on this motion.

What are the Conservatives waiting for to bring this motion to a vote?

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, if we all agreed in the House, then the document would have been produced as requested. To suggest that we all agree is to say something that is simply not true. The government does not agree, which is why it is failing to fulfill the order passed in the House, which is to provide, unredacted, all the documents requested.

I will say to my colleague from the Bloc Québécois that, if he is dissatisfied with how the people of Quebec are suffering under the Liberal government, then he has to answer for the fact that he voted to sustain the government in matters of confidence. Canadians have had enough. He has had enough. Instead of this dystopian Parliament that exists without the support of Canadians, my colleague should be supporting non-confidence and making sure that we move to an election so that Canadians, and Quebecers, can have their say.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is nothing but a game for the leader of the Conservative Party and the Conservative caucus. At the end of the day, if the Conservatives stop talking, it passes. The Liberal Party wants to see it go to committee. The Conservatives know that, but the games continue.

The only government to be held in contempt of Parliament, in the history of Canada and the Commonwealth, is Stephen Harper's government. When he was prime minister, who was the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister? It was none other than the leader of the Conservative Party. Today, we have the leader of the Conservative Party saying he does not even want to get the security clearance. The question is why.

What is the history? What does the leader of the Conservative Party have to hide? Why is he not being accountable to the public, to the Canadian people?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, that is just a red herring that the parliamentary secretary continues to bring up in the House.

Members of Parliament from all political parties have security clearances. The leader of the Conservative Party has said quite clearly that, if the Prime Minister and his cabinet and caucus are so sure of themselves, they can simply release the names. I urge my colleague who asked the question to go to caucus this week and bring this up, that is, if they are not dealing with something else.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has done an incredible job over the last nine years, since I have been a member of Parliament, of exposing the government's corruption and scandal. For those in the gallery who perhaps missed what we were talking about, and those in TV land who are watching, we are talking about over \$400 million in taxpayer funds. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest in which Liberal insiders funnelled \$480 million to their own pockets and to their own companies.

I have asked colleagues this before: If somebody steals from us, do we go to a committee or do we go to the RCMP?

• (1355)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I said in my remarks that, if this were a private sector company and if over \$400 million of suspected fraudulent activity had gone on in the company, that company would have a responsibility to take that information to the police for an investigation as soon as possible. The responsibility would be to its shareholders, if it was publicly traded, or to its board and ownership, if it was privately held.

As a matter of fact, if they had that information in the private sector and did not proceed with charges, one could assume they were negligent or even compromised themselves. I think my answer speaks for itself.

Statements by Members

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now three weeks into this debate, and we still have Conservative members being purposefully obtuse about what is actually before us. They wrote the motion to go to committee, but they are pretending that, somehow, everybody else is obstructing.

They talk about Liberal insiders. Will the hon. member finally be clear with Canadians and note that, on March 24, 2022, the same person in question, Annette Verschuren, donated to the Conservative Party as well? In fact, they have a long history of donating to the Conservative Party.

Will they come clean and just admit that Liberal, Tory, same old story?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has tried to put on a brave face, but a basic civics course would let them know who the actual government is. The government is across the way, both from me and my colleague who just asked the question. At least, that used to be the way it was, until he and his leader signed on to a supply and confidence agreement; by the way, that agreement enabled this kind of behaviour for the last two-plus years.

It is a bit rich to hear my colleague talking about this. I am a member of the procedure and House affairs committee, and he has said at procedure and House affairs while I have been there that, if this issue goes towards the committee, it will get buried; it will get mired down in the committee. He knows this full well.

This is the appropriate place to be having this debate. This is the stage of the business of the nation. We need to have that discussion and have it out right here in front of all Canadians, not buried away in some obscure committee in the basement of this place.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will just ask the member the same question I asked earlier in regard to this question of privilege. It appears, based on what I am hearing, that all parties, all members are in support of this question of privilege and making sure we are able to do the important work.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I see a member who wants to chirp at me because he has a different question; he should wait his turn as I just patiently waited my turn.

Can the member share if there is any member of Parliament, or any political party, who is opposed to this question of privilege? Does the member agree that we should perhaps call the question so that we can do the important work that this question of privilege is requesting the House and this place to do?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I will remind my colleague that, even though this debate has been going on for quite some time, this has been my first opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents on this particular issue. I was very much looking forward to that. As I also said in my remarks, although I do not know if my friend who asked the question was here, the Speaker tabled more documents in reference to the motion just this morning. The documents, from the various government agencies from which they were requested, continue to be redacted, either in part or in full.

Conservatives believe in transparency and accountability. We know the only way to get the full documents and to uphold the in-

tent of the original motion that was passed is to make sure those documents are deposited in the chamber before we dispose of the motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PHARMACARE

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to celebrate the passing of the Pharmacare Act, which will have an immense impact on the lives of Canadians and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Every Conservative member of the House voted against the historic pharmacare legislation at every step. They voted against legislation that will help nine million women and gender-diverse Canadians access universal, single-pay contraceptives. Canadians have made it clear they do not want slogans; they want a government that will put their health first, including their reproductive rights, and make lasting impacts to the Canadian health care system. It is our Liberal government that is delivering just that.

* * *

• (1400)

CANADIAN FARMERS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is harvest, a time of thanksgiving for tens of thousands of farmers across Canada, including in my home province of Manitoba. Despite the Liberal-NDP plan to quadruple the carbon tax on these hard-working individuals, Conservatives wish to express our gratitude to farmers.

Manitoba's 20,000 farmers are renowned worldwide as consistent and reliable suppliers of safe, high-quality grains, oilseeds, livestock and agri-food products. This reputation will continue to thrive despite the Liberal-NDP effort to make them less competitive globally by quadrupling the carbon tax. In 2023, Manitoba's crop sector achieved a record \$6.6 billion in revenue, with this year anticipated to be higher. Across Canada, the agriculture and agri-food system employs 2.3 million people and contributes \$150 billion to GDP.

It is harvest time and Thanksgiving time, so when we enjoy another meal with family and friends, we should remember the farmer who made it possible. I thank our Canadian farmers.

*Statements by Members***PHARMACARE**

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pharmacare matters to my constituents in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, and I will never stop advocating for national pharmacare. I do not believe that anyone should have to choose between paying their rent and paying for the prescription drugs they need. That is why we have laid a strong framework and launched the first phase of our plan.

Cost is one of the biggest barriers for women to access contraceptives, but under our new pharmacare plan, women will get the access they need without having to empty their wallet. No Nova Scotian with diabetes should ever feel the need to stretch their insulin doses or other medication just to try to make it last longer. Our pharmacare plan will be there to support folks living with diabetes so they no longer need to worry about the costs; they can focus on their health and well-being.

Canada is the only country in the world with universal health care that does not provide universal coverage for prescription drugs, and our Liberal government is working to fix that.

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*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD**

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 11, we celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child. This year's theme was "Girls' vision for the future", which conveys the need for urgent action and for hope, driven by the power of girls' voices and their vision for the future.

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face. Future generations will be disproportionately affected by global crises related to climate change, international conflict and poverty, as well as by push-back on hard-won gains for gender equality.

However, girls cannot realize this vision alone. They need allies, because the potential of the world's more than 1.1 billion girls is limitless. Girls are breaking boundaries and barriers posed by stereotypes and exclusion, including those directed at children with disabilities and those living in marginalized communities. They are doing so as entrepreneurs, innovators and initiators of global movements for future generations.

Let's go, girls.

* * *

*[English]***BRITISH COLUMBIA PROVINCIAL ELECTION**

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, British Columbians braved an atmospheric river to vote for their next government. While a clear majority of British Columbians voted for candidates who believe in the science behind climate change and vaccines and rejected the conspiracy theories that defined the Conservative Party, the final make-up of the legislative assembly is still too close to call.

We do know that West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country will have three first-time MLAs, all from different parties. I congratulate Randene Neill and Lynne Block for their incredible campaigns and hard work, but I want to give a special shout-out to Jeremy Valeriote, who, after being ahead on election day four years ago by 60 votes unfortunately did not win. However, this Saturday, he was officially declared the winner and the first-ever Green Party MLA for the mainland of British Columbia.

All members of the House know that the long days of door knocking, making phone calls and connecting with voters is physically and emotionally demanding, so I want to congratulate Karin Kirkpatrick, Sara Eftekhar, Archie Kaario, Jen Ford, Yuri Fulmer, Chris Moore, Chris Hergesheimer and Greg Reid for putting their name forward to be in the spotlight to represent our communities. Our province and democracy are better for it.

* * *

● (1405)

FINANCE

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has missed the 2024 deficit target by 17%, making debt-servicing charges the fastest-growing budget item. It is Small Business Week. Can members imagine if the CFO of a business spent the majority of the budget on paying debt? They would be replaced or the company would go bankrupt.

I recently did a post on my Facebook page asking for stories about my community of Peterborough—Kawartha, and I received hundreds of comments about businesses donating time and money to affordable housing, organizations and volunteers helping with the homelessness and opioid crises. A comment from Alan Clark really jumped off the page; he said that the community has done more than the government to help the people. That is so true. The most compassionate thing a leader can do is make life more affordable.

It is time for a government and a leader who know that budgets do not balance themselves. It is time for a leader who empowers small businesses, cuts the taxes and allows them to flourish and give to our community. Together, Conservatives will build a Canada that works for the people who do the work.

Statements by Members

[English]

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the RCMP revealed to Canadians allegations of transnational aggression by the Indian government. This includes tying murders of Canadian citizens on Canadian soil to agents of the Government of India, the use of organized crime to target the Sikh community in Canada and foreign interference in our democratic processes.

This very serious evidence has sent shock waves through the community. Since then, our allies in the United States, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia have come to support us in our investigation and have urged the Indian government to cooperate.

I want to remind the Indian government that Canadians will not be intimidated by the acts of foreign interference and violence. We will not tolerate any form of intimidation, harassment or harmful targeting of communities in Canada.

* * *

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the RCMP's alarming statement revealing it has gathered credible evidence that agents of the Indian government are involved in serious criminal activity in Canada, including coercion, extortion and homicides, many Canadians are understandably shaken and concerned for their safety. Trust in our institutions is being tested, and the sense of security that Canadians should feel has been deeply affected, particularly within the Sikh and South Asian communities.

Despite this unsettling news, we must recognize and thank our law enforcement agencies for their tireless work in uncovering these serious threats and taking decisive action to protect our communities. Their work is critical to ensuring the safety of every Canadian, and we stand firmly behind them as they continue these investigations. Together we will hold those responsible to account.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government supported by the Bloc Québécois, we already knew that the size of the federal government had reached unprecedented proportions.

This week, however, we learned that the total number of federal public servants has increased by 42%, with more than 108,000 new employees added to the payroll. Costs have gone up 68% since 2016, with public service spending reaching an all-time high of \$67.4 billion. That is huge.

According to data from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, federal departments are struggling to meet 50% of their target every year. Furthermore, consultants' fees cost \$21.6 billion during the 2023-24 fiscal year. That is a new record for our country: more public servants, more consultants and fewer services to the public.

What a disgrace.

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know that Stephen Harper has been the only prime minister in history to date who has been in contempt of Parliament? Interestingly enough, the leader of the Conservative Party today, the Conservative Reform Party, was his parliamentary secretary at the time. Is it any surprise that he would not want to get the security clearance necessary in order to understand what is happening on foreign interference. It begs this question: What is the history of the leader of the Conservative Party? Does he believe that he is not going to be able to get the security clearance? Is that the reason he does not want it?

Canadians have the right to know the leader of the Conservative Party's past. What is he hiding? I want to know, and Canadians want to know, why he will not step up and do something about it. Why will he not do the honourable thing and apply for the security clearance?

* * *

● (1410)

FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

This weekend in Surrey, over 15,000 people attended Ugly Potato Day, an initiative that invites residents to get imperfect produce for free from farmers. Over 250,000 pounds of produce was donated. Food insecurity is so harsh that residents were willing to wait in line, in one of the worst storms we have seen, for hours just for the chance to get some potatoes and carrots for their families.

Food Banks Canada reports that the cost of living has become so high that food bank use has increased by 50% since 2021. British Columbians have the second-highest poverty rate in the country, impacting over 382,000 individuals.

It is clear that things are broken. Canadians need relief, but the Liberal-NDP government is not listening. Only common-sense Conservatives will reduce spending, eliminate the carbon tax, boost paycheques and give families some much-needed relief.

* * *

INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Statements by Members

The Liberals once again find themselves mired in corruption and controversy, as witness after witness has testified that the Prime Minister and his ministers stood idly by while billions were stolen by businesses falsely claiming to be indigenous-owned. The Assembly of First Nations has testified that the vast majority of companies taking advantage of the Liberal government's indigenous contracting program are actually shell companies. However, rather than helping Conservatives uncover the truth and solve this problem, Liberal MPs held up committee and failed to address the issue of billions being misspent. While Liberal MPs stall and deflect, common-sense Conservatives will continue to investigate the contracting abuse and theft taking place under the Liberal government.

With WE Charity, SNC-Lavalin, the green slush fund, Arrive-CAN, foreign interference and now indigenous procurement, when will the Prime Minister do the right thing and call an election?

* * *

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Monday, the RCMP took the unprecedented step of informing Canadians that agents of the Government of India are involved in serious criminal activity on Canadian soil. These crimes represent a grave threat to our national security, yet the leader of the Conservative Party is displaying a concerning lack of seriousness in response to the RCMP's alarming announcement. His failure to acknowledge the severity of these actions undermines public confidence in our institutions and Canada's commitment to upholding justice. As Shachi Kurl, president of Angus Reid, said, "I think that's folly, and frankly, I think he should grow up, get the security clearance and find out what he needs to find out."

At a time when a unified response is required, the Leader of the Opposition's dismissal sends the wrong message both domestically and internationally. Canadians expect their leaders to prioritize national security and the rule of law above partisan politics.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, declarations by members, or S. O. 31s, are an important opportunity for all members to express themselves freely. The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo knows that very well and caught my eye. I would ask him not to take the floor unless recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

* * *

KIRSTEN PATRICK

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to mark the passing of Kirsten Patrick, a young 34-year-old resident of Smithers whose life ended last Monday at the Smithers District Hospital. I had known Kirsten for most of the time that I have lived in Smithers. I remember her broad smile. I remember the way that she greeted everyone on Main Street, including our mayor.

Kirsten lived an unimaginably difficult life, one marked by trauma, addiction, violence, homelessness and loss. For the past several

years, she lived in a tent. She was a fighter, a survivor, a neighbour and a friend.

My heart today goes out to her mom Marina, to her kids, to her partner Casey and to everyone who knew and loved her. Kirsten's life mattered and she will be deeply missed.

* * *

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

WOMEN FARMERS OF MONTRÉGIE-OUEST

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with pride to congratulate Mélissa Bourdon on being named woman farmer of the year in the Montérégie-Ouest region. From farmwork and fieldwork to financial management and direct sales, Ms. Bourdon is always finding ways to innovate on the farm she manages alongside her father, François. With the strong support of those close to her, and on top of her endless plans and projects, she even finds the time to work as a part-time firefighter in Saint-Étienne-de-Beauharnois and to advocate for the Union des producteurs agricoles. Ms. Bourdon is a smart woman whose passion and commitment will undoubtedly keep her at the forefront of agriculture for many years to come.

Likewise, we applaud Ange-Marie Delforge for winning the special tribute award. She is known for her straight-talking ways and, above all, her unwavering determination to fight for our agriculture. Long live women's involvement in trade unionism and agriculture, and many thanks to the women farmers of Montérégie-Ouest.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, we have more proof that the costly NDP-Liberal coalition is not worth the cost, crime or corruption. The Speaker has ruled that the government has violated an order of the House. The Liberals are paralyzing Parliament to hide \$400 million of corruption.

The Auditor General has found that 186 contracts went to Liberal appointees, contracts that must be turned over to the police. These contracts are not just documents; they represent money stolen from the pockets of Canadians and given to the friends of the Prime Minister and his cronies, money that Canadians could have used for rent, groceries and gas.

The solution is simple: The Liberals need to obey the Speaker's ruling, turn over the documents and make Parliament work. This is the common-sense plan, the Conservative plan. Common-sense Conservatives are here to deliver solutions for the doubling of housing costs, food inflation and the crime and chaos on our streets. It is time for common sense. It is time for ethics and integrity. It is time to bring it home.

The Speaker: It is very good to welcome and recognize the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

SUPPORT FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to be with friends and colleagues and am thankful for the support so many of them have shown me. I am looking forward to being back with everyone. I am especially grateful to doctors, scientists and health care professionals for their medicine, research and caring, which have allowed me to work every day for the community I love, through multiple surgeries, radiation and ongoing chemotherapy.

I know there are people on the Hill who have gone through cancer or are going through it now. My heart is with them. Cancer touches all of us, and it is hard. Sometimes the fight is week by week; sometimes it is hour by hour. It can be lonely despite having the best support system.

Those who are hurting should know they have one more person in their corner. I understand and support them and I walk beside them and their families as they climb every hill.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister has doubled the debt and the cost of housing to the point where a monthly mortgage payment in Quebec is \$1,055 higher than it was five years ago. That is a 74% increase. On top of that, two million Canadians are relying on food banks while the government wastes our money. Now Parliament is paralyzed by an attempt to cover up a \$400-million scandal.

What is the Prime Minister doing? He is trying to save himself from his own caucus.

Will he call an election so we can fix what he has broken?

• (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Conservatives are starting off with a question about the Canadian economy. I think we can all be happy knowing that inflation dropped to 1.6% in September, which is a major success story for all Canadians. This will really make a difference in Canadians' lives.

However, the Conservatives do not want to talk about Canadian success stories.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are going through hell because rent has doubled and the cost of living is out of control, what is the Prime Minister doing? He is trying to save himself from his own caucus, which is now revolting against him. He is not working for Canadians. He is working to save his own skin.

The funny thing is that the Liberals may not have confidence in this Prime Minister anymore, but the leader of the Bloc Québécois still does.

Will the Prime Minister finally call an election so that we can fix what he has broken?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the real question is, why does the opposition leader keep obstructing the work of the House? I think it is because he is afraid to lose another confidence vote in the House.

We have won two confidence votes. The Conservatives are the only ones who do not want another confidence vote because they will lose again. The House does not have confidence in the Leader of the Opposition.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend in Cloverdale, 15,000 people lined up in the pouring rain with the hope that they might get a few rejected potatoes. It was Ugly Potato Day in that city, and 15,000 British Columbians are so hungry and desperate that they needed to collect rejected foodstuffs.

Two million Canadians are lined up at food banks. There are 1,400 homeless encampments in Ontario today. What is the Prime Minister doing? He is working to save his political skin from his revolting caucus.

This cannot go on. Will he call a carbon tax election now?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really hope that every single MP in the House agrees that in our great country, no one should ever go hungry. However, when the Conservatives talk about the most vulnerable, they are crying crocodile tears. How do I know that? I know that because they have had the gall to vote against a national school food program, a program that will feed 400,000 Canadian kids. How can the Conservatives look themselves in the face when they oppose feeding Canadian kids?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that program, though it has cost millions, has not fed a single hungry child. It has fed bureaucracy, which is all it ever was intended to do. Meanwhile, two million people are lined up at food banks. We watched 15,000 people line up for an ugly potato because they cannot afford to eat. Diseases like scurvy are back, and one in four kids goes to school hungry after nine years of the Prime Minister, yet his priority is saving his political career from his revolting caucus.

This cannot go on. Will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are damning themselves with their own words. I was at a school in downtown Winnipeg on Friday with Premier Wab Kinew, and we gave those beautiful, wonderful children some bannock, a little carton of milk, some jam, some butter and a banana. That was not bureaucracy that fed those kids; that was the deal we did with Manitoba.

The Conservatives are against feeding kids. How could they stand up and be in favour of not feeding kids?

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is she kidding me? She says that Canadians should be happy. While one in four kids go to school hungry, while two million people line up at food banks, while scurvy is making a comeback after nine years of this government, Canadians should be grateful that she showed up with a few snacks and a photo op at one school.

This is the same finance minister who has just blown \$7 billion past her deficit target, meaning more inflation and higher rates. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister hides in a fetal position under his desk. Will he call a carbon tax election now?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have clearly knocked the Leader of the Opposition off his game this afternoon. How can he have the temerity to talk about actual meals fed to actual children as bureaucracy? That tells us how cynical these Canadians are and how low they go. Then he talks about inflation. It has been in the Bank of Canada's target range for nine months in a row. It fell below 2% in September and rates have come down three times. That is what is happening with inflation.

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, who is flying the Liberal plane?

It is October 21. There are eight days left to pass Bill C-319 and increase OAS for seniors; otherwise, the Liberals are risking an election. The idea of increasing pensions is supported by the Conservatives, the NDP and 79% of the population. Even the Liberals in committee agree.

There is clearly no one flying the Liberal plane. Everyone supports this initiative, but nothing is being done about it. The deadline is eight days away.

Is that why the Liberals want their leader out?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Government of Canada, the Liberal government, we were able to lower the retirement age to 65, increase the GIS and help hundreds of thousands of Quebecers by providing dental care for seniors.

As a result, we were able to lower seniors' poverty rates well below the national average, all without the support or help of the Bloc Québécois.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, guess who has not yet said a word about Bill C-282, which is being blocked by two senators? I am talking about the Prime Minister himself.

He has never asked Peter Boehm or Peter Harder to do their job. He has not said a word. He is too busy pulling all the knives out of his back. Not only is he the one who appointed those two senators, but one of them is even a friend, specifically, Peter Harder, whom he often calls for advice.

Could he pick up the phone now, call his buddy Peter and tell him to do his job?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my colleague is aware that the reason we can talk about supply management in Canada is that 50 years ago, it was a Liberal government that introduced supply management for farmers in Quebec and across Canada.

The reason we are still talking about it now is that, during negotiations with President Trump, it was a Liberal government that defended the interests of farmers by defending supply management at all costs for Quebecers and Canadians, contrary to what the Conservatives wanted to do.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, country first, party second.

According to the RCMP, the Indian government hired thugs to terrorize Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Conservatives are laughing about this, but people have died as a result, and they have meddled in our politics. The Prime Minister has said that there are multiple Conservative MPs and/or candidates compromised. They may be sitting in the chamber right now, but the Conservative leader chooses ignorance. Has the Prime Minister directly urged the leader of the Conservatives to get his security clearance?

• (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear. We think all party leaders in this House should have the required security clearance so that they can receive information concerning the threats to this House or threats to Canada involving foreign interference. We also take the comments of the leader of the NDP very seriously with respect to protecting Sikh Canadians and protecting those who have been victims of this foreign interference by the Government of India.

Oral Questions

My responsibility as public safety minister is to ensure the safety of all Canadians, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, country first, party second. I dare the Conservatives to laugh again. I see they are not. They are quiet.

[Translation]

Narendra Modi must not see that a Canadian leader is willing to turn a blind eye to crimes committed against Canadians. Every member of the House must condemn India's interference. There must be consequences for any parliamentarian involved.

Has the Prime Minister directly urged the Conservative leader to get his security clearance?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear. We fundamentally believe that all party leaders in the House should have the appropriate security clearance so that they can find out the information they need to manage their parliamentary caucus and understand the threats facing Canadians.

I wholeheartedly endorse the sentiments of the NDP leader concerning the need to condemn the Government of India's interference. I congratulate the RCMP on a job well done. I know that investigations are under way. We have full confidence in the work of the RCMP.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it seems that no part of Canadian life is safe from the finance minister's radical tax rampage, not food, not home, not gas and not even music.

In response to new streaming taxes from the government, Spotify just announced that it is raising subscription fees by 15%. Even the simple things like kicking back and listening to a playlist are not immune to this greedy government.

When will the finance minister wake up, face the music, and finally admit that her new taxes and spending are not worth the cost?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are recycling the rhetoric of the big platforms, which have been making millions in profits in Canada for years and which were recently asked by the CRTC to contribute to our system, like every other Canadian company.

This is not the first time that Spotify and the others have raised their subscription fees, but never once did we hear the Conservatives complain. This time, however, when it is for something that will help our Canadian artists, especially emerging artists, the Conservatives are up in arms.

I am not terribly surprised to see that they are still in the pocket of the U.S. tech giants.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, their hands are in the pockets of average Canadians. The finance minister told Canadians to cut Disney+, and she is probably going to tell them to cut their Spotify subscriptions, too.

The Liberals say the taxes will fix climate change and the economy. They say that paying more taxes is going lead Canadians to be better off. All the while, the Liberals talk down to people. The carbon tax is up, the streaming tax is up, capital gains taxes are up and the finance minister missed her target by 17%.

When will the finance minister admit that she has failed, axe the taxes and let Canadians live their lives without the government's hands in Canadians' pockets?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have a plan for a prosperous economic future for this country.

The Conservatives, who continue to deny the existence of climate change, have a plan that leads backwards, not forwards. We are ensuring that things like the \$12-billion Dow plant in Alberta is getting built, along with the \$7-billion Jansen potash mine, electric vehicle and battery plants, and hydrogen facilities in Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have a plan for a future that is a great and prosperous future. The Conservatives have no plan.

• (1435)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the consequences of the NDP-Liberal plan. A new report shows that 35% of Albertan families are skipping meals because of high food costs, yet the Liberals and NDP tell Canadians that they have never had it so good.

I would like to remind the Prime Minister that his own Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that Canadians are worse off paying the carbon tax. In fact, when the NDP-Liberals quadruple the carbon tax, it will cost Alberta families \$2,000 a year.

Will the NDP-Liberals just finally admit their carbon tax is a scam and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we continue to fight for Canadian families.

Oral Questions

How do we do that? One way is the Canada child benefit. Families with children under the age of six can receive almost \$7,800 each and every year per child. This is tangible support that arrives each and every month to help families afford the basics or whatever their child needs.

This is how we fight on this side for Canadian families.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the minister some facts about what Canadian families are facing. Some 35% of Albertan families are skipping meals because of high food costs. Food bank usage in Mississauga is up 60%. Doctors are worried about scurvy because families cannot buy nutritious food. Food inflation in Canada is 37% higher than in the United States. The government's own Parliamentary Budget Officer admitted and confirmed the carbon tax is all pain and no gain. The NDP-Liberal government can end the pain it is inflicting on Canadians by calling a carbon tax election.

Will the government do it?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cutting a cheque that low-income Canadians are getting, as the vast majority of them, or 80%, are getting more back than they pay, is not going to fix an issue like scurvy. What is going to fix scurvy is certainly not cutting our health system; it is not getting rid of diabetes medication or getting rid of free dental care; it is not attacking the foundations of our health system just as we are working with provinces and territories on solutions.

What is going to get it done in a time of global uncertainty is collaboration and working together, not nonsense slogans.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, facts are stubborn things. The Quebec Professional Association of Real Estate Brokers says that the median price of a single-family home in Quebec is now \$450,000. It has increased by 74% in five years.

New homebuyers are now paying \$1,055 more per month. In Saguenay, purchase prices have gone up by \$130,000, making it even harder for people to buy a home. What does the “Liberal Bloc” intend to do to help these Quebecers?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question. As the member knows full well, we are investing to build affordable housing in Quebec and across the country. In Quebec, we have invested more than \$900 million to build housing.

I find it interesting, because the Conservative Party opposed the program that helps build housing. When the leader of the Conservative Party was the federal minister responsible for housing, he only built six homes across the country. That is unacceptable.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, facts are stubborn things. In Trois-Rivières, the price of a single-family home has shot up by \$190,000. In Drummondville, it has gone up by \$200,000. That does not even include the costs associated with buying a home.

These increases speak to a growing crisis that warrants urgent action.

What is the “Liberal Bloc” government going to do?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a lucky coincidence that the Conservative leader is here today, because I am going to ask him to help me. We travelled all over the Quebec region, including my colleague's riding, to look for the six affordable housing units that the Conservative leader built across the country during his entire tenure, and we have yet to find them. Could he come to Quebec with me to look for them?

* * *

● (1440)

JUSTICE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, recent events at the Bedford school in Montreal remind us that it would be a serious mistake to think that we have achieved secularism. On the contrary, we need to do even more. In Quebec, we are witnessing the return of religion to our schools, after decades of fighting to keep it out.

Gender equality and the separation of church and state are at the heart of Quebec's integration model and must be assiduously and regularly protected at all times. Will the government commit now to not challenging Bill 21 before the Supreme Court?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois sometimes confuses the responsibilities of the Government of Quebec with those of the Government of Canada. We are not responsible for education. Perhaps the Bloc Québécois wishes things were different, but education is not a federal government responsibility. My colleague might want to run for a seat in the Quebec National Assembly.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one day we will get there.

I would remind members that prayers are still said every day before the House begins its work. I would remind members that the government continues to uphold a religious exemption in the Criminal Code that permits calls for violence or even murder. That happened just a few weeks ago. That is serious. I would also remind members that the Prime Minister appointed a representative who spends her time criticizing Quebec's Bill 21 and blaming it for everything bad.

Canada is not moving toward secularism. It is moving away from it, and it is also working on moving Quebec away from it. Will the government listen to reason and restrain its irresistible desire to constantly undermine Quebec's model of secularism?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about desire. If he really has a desire to get mixed up in Quebec's jurisdictions, maybe he should run for a seat in the Quebec National Assembly during its next election.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I usually have a lot of respect for my colleague, but today he refuses to listen to the questions and his answers are nonsense.

Quebec chose an integration model based on common values such as gender equality, separation of church and state, and French as our common language and historical heritage. Ottawa chose a very different model. It chose multiculturalism, which basically means newcomers do not need to change or integrate. The result is that while Quebec is trying to integrate newcomers, Ottawa is telling them that it is okay if they do the opposite. The truth is that the federal integration model runs contrary to Quebec's plan for an egalitarian, secular, French society.

When will this government, or the next one, understand that multiculturalism does not work in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite all my efforts, I find it difficult to answer a question about the Quebec government's areas of jurisdiction.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians are worse off. The effects of his deficits, inflation and carbon tax hikes have been devastating. A new report by the Angus Reid Institute says that a majority of Canadians are struggling just to buy food. Of course, that is even worse for low-income households, with two-thirds of those Canadians saying they cannot even afford to feed their families.

One way to lower food prices would be to axe the carbon tax on the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who ships the food and the grocer who sells the food. The Prime Minister could do that today.

Will the he show some compassion, lower food prices and just axe the tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day, we see the Conservatives get up in the House and tell mistruths. Eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back than they pay for the price on pollution.

Of course, this is no surprise when we hear what the Conservatives' closest friends and allies have to say. Danielle Smith believes planes are spraying chemtrails. Ches Crosbie says climate change is bogus. John Rustad says fighting climate change is a plot to reduce the human population and force people to eat bugs.

They say one can tell a lot about people from the company they keep. Well, we certainly can.

The Speaker: Although the hon. minister did not make reference to a particular member, I encourage all members to skate further away from the line, especially in regard to using that word.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the carbon tax scheme is not making Canadians better off. Otherwise, two-thirds of low-income Canadians would not be reporting that they cannot afford to pay for groceries and would not be lining up at food banks or waiting hours to get rejected potatoes.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, the government's own watchdog, has concluded that when we factor in all the costs of the carbon tax, and remember that Canadians do not get to pick and choose which costs they pay, and after the Liberals are done quadrupling the carbon tax, a family in Ontario will be \$1,400 poorer; one in New Brunswick, \$1,000 poorer; and one in Saskatchewan, \$2,000 poorer.

Why not let the people decide in a carbon tax election?

● (1445)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and 300 economists across this country have said that eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back, and it works directly inverse to income. By taking away the price on pollution, the most vulnerable will become more vulnerable. The Leader of the Opposition and his caucus know that, but certainly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The Chair is having some difficulty hearing the answer of the hon. minister. I will ask the hon. minister to start from the top, and will ask the hon. member for Foothills not to speak when not recognized by the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservatives do not believe in the reality of climate change, nor do they have a plan for our economic future. They are no different from Mr. Rustad, who has endorsed the Leader of the Opposition. He said, "We should not be trying to fight climate change" and that "this narrative about climate...I can only put it to the fact that somehow they think that we need to reduce the world population." Many other candidates have essentially said that we do not need to fight climate change.

Canadians know that climate change is real. Canadians know we need a plan for the future of the economy, and that is what is on this side of the House. Shame on you.

The Speaker: I can take some slings and arrows, but I am certain the hon. member was not referring to the Speaker.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

I recently visited a local food bank in Dauphin, Manitoba, where the volunteers told me they cannot keep up with the increased demand. However, the Prime Minister does not care, as he plans to quadruple the carbon tax and force Manitoba families to pay \$1,300 in carbon taxes every single year.

Manitobans cannot afford the costly carbon tax, so when will the Prime Minister give Canadians a choice and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to be in Manitoba to speak with some parents about what they are facing there. I had the opportunity to announce, alongside the Deputy Prime Minister, that we have come to an agreement on our national school food program that will see, this school year, over 19,000 more children receive food at school. It is an over \$17-million commitment over three years. That is what we do on this side of the House to ensure that families are supported.

* * *

LABOUR

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, flight attendants, who are predominantly women, work an average of 35 hours a month unpaid. Consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have overlooked this issue for decades. The big airline bosses are profiting off of the unpaid labour of flight attendants. It is time for this exploitation to end.

Today, I will be tabling a bill to end unpaid work for all flight attendants in Canada. Will the government support it?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian airlines are, of course, private sector entities. The government sets a minimum standard and lets the hard work of collective bargaining take it from there. Flight attendants have a collective agreement that sets out their hours and their wages, and it is not my place to comment on it.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are dying in the streets, on park benches, in alleys and sometimes in portable toilets. The number of deaths among the unhoused has skyrocketed. In fact, it has tripled in recent years, and this is just the tip of the iceberg considering that a lot of deaths are not even recorded. The housing crisis kills.

Liberals and Conservatives alike have allowed this crisis to fester so that big property owners could line their pockets. They have put profits before people.

What are the Liberals going to do to house people and save lives?

• (1450)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I represent an area in Montreal's east end. We are seeing the human crisis playing out.

Unlike the Conservatives, who ignore human dignity in order to exploit human misery, on this side of the House, we are going to work with every municipality to make sure that everyone has a roof over their heads.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, I spoke in the House about the growth of radical far-right movements. They have organized disinformation campaigns, have impacted how some people and politicians treat others and have led some politicians to act against the best interests of Canadians.

Our government has said that Canada will stand with the Ukrainian people until they win. Ukraine must win because its victory is essential to Canada's security.

There is a coordinated Russian campaign to spread disinformation, sow distress and encourage isolationism. Could the Minister of International Trade please share with us how Russian foreign interference is a threat to our support of Ukraine and to all Canadians?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his steadfast support for Ukraine.

The Conservative leader's dismissal of Ukraine as a “faraway” land is shameful. The Conservatives' willingness to appease far-right disinformation, often fuelled by foreign actors like Russia, undermines democracy and Canadian values. Canadians deserve leadership that stands firmly against these dangerous influences.

While the Conservatives abandon Ukraine, on this side of the House, we will keep supporting Ukraine until it wins this war.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and now time is up.

At a time when Canadians are skipping meals and many are living paycheque to paycheque, the Liberals have siphoned \$400 million of taxpayer money to contracts for their friends at the green slush fund. The Liberal-appointed board has racked up at least 186 conflicts of interest.

When will the government end the cover-up so the House can get back to helping Canadians deal with the cost of living crisis that it created?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that after nine years, it is the same slogan, the same type of disinformation, the same type of false accusation. It is time to get real.

The Conservatives know very well that we acted in a timely way to dissolve that organization. The board has resigned, the CEO has resigned and the organization no longer exists. We made a solemn promise to Canadians to get to the bottom of this. That is what we did. The Conservatives should let the House do the important work, which is work for Canadians, instead of filibustering their own motion. It is shameful what they are doing.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is shameful is the cover-up. The Liberal government is still in contempt of Parliament by refusing to turn over the documents that could certainly reveal the depths of its corruption with the green slush fund. It has now paralyzed Parliament to hide its scandal. Meanwhile, Canadians are suffering through the unprecedented food, crime and housing crises that it created.

Will the government finally turn over the documents today and give Canadians the answers they deserve?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what my hon. colleague is saying is false. The government has handed over thousands of documents, just done in a way that protects the charter rights of Canadians. What is true is that the Conservatives are filibustering their own motion because they do not want to respect the Speaker's ruling, which asks for this unprecedented motion to go to committee.

There is only one thing the Conservatives are afraid of: They do not want the House to get to work because they know that if there is another confidence motion, the Conservative leader will lose it.

• (1455)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal coalition, taxes, costs and crime are all up and now time is up.

After Liberal-appointed board members of SDTC were caught funnelling 400 million tax dollars to 186 of their companies, why will the NDP-Liberals not end the cover-up today by releasing the documents, as Parliament ordered and the Speaker agreed with, so there can be accountability for the obvious corruption and potential crimes that have taken place under the costly coalition?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Speaker's ruling was to send this matter to committee for further study because it was unprecedented what the Conservatives were asking for. We agree with the Speaker's ruling. The Conservatives are obstructing their own obstruction because they do not want the truth to come out, which is that they are trying to abuse the extraordinary privileges they have in order to override the rights of Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that there is more proof these Liberals are not worth the cost, the crime and the corruption. Here are the facts: 186 conflicts

of interest took place and 400 million tax dollars were funnelled to the companies of Liberal-appointed board members. The Speaker ruled that the evidence needs to be handed over unredacted, as Parliament has demanded.

Why are the NDP-Liberals not releasing the documents? What and who are they covering up for?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is typical for the Conservatives to omit the facts that are inconvenient to them. The fact of the matter is that we have provided thousands of pages of documents already; we are respecting the Speaker's ruling, which is to send this matter to committee for further study. I think all Canadians would appreciate and expect that the police follow due process. They expect that parliamentarians support their rights. They would expect that parliamentarians would not try to abuse their extraordinary powers to go after their own partisan vendettas and attack Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we speak, three vehicles have been set on fire in three days in Ahuntsic. The federal government needs to realize that Quebec has been plunged into another gang war.

This war is being waged by younger and younger gang members, who are practically child soldiers. It is a war that is taking innocent lives, like those of Léonor Geraudie and her seven-year-old daughter Vérane, who were collateral victims of arson in Old Montreal on October 5. Meanwhile, it has been radio silence in Ottawa.

What is the government waiting for? When will it crack down on criminal gangs?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we are not waiting. We are taking action. We have added more RCMP members. While the Conservatives made cuts to border services, for example, we invested to crack down on criminal gangs.

I had some very positive discussions with Minister Bonnardel at our federal-provincial meetings last week. We agreed to continue to work together. I will continue to support him in his strategy to stop drones from dropping contraband goods onto prison grounds in Quebec, for example.

We are working hard together, and we will continue to do so.

Oral Questions

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. This gang war is affecting all of Quebec.

In Montreal, two people died in a fire allegedly linked to extortion. In Frampton, a 14-year-old died, apparently trying to take on the Hells Angels, no less. In Quebec City and eastern Quebec, it has been open war for months. As early as September 20, the Quebec City police were warning other police forces that this war could be worse than the one in the 1990s, and things have only gotten worse since.

Does this government understand how serious the situation is?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the need to ensure public safety in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. That is exactly what we are doing every single day.

I am very heartened by the RCMP's work with its partners in Quebec, including the Sûreté du Québec, the Montreal police and the Quebec City police. RCMP Commissioner Duheme often talks to me about joint task forces, particularly to address the challenges of criminal gangs.

We will continue to do our job. Frankly, the Bloc Québécois should support the government in this important process.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in another conflict of interest involving the Liberal government's de facto finance minister, we have found out that he has been caught using his access to lobby governments to benefit himself and his company. It is carbon tax Carney's heat pump hustle. He is claiming it is green policy, but his only policy is to line his pockets with green, and the Prime Minister is shielding him from Canada's conflict of interest laws and lobbying regulations.

After nine years under the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Will they just have carbon tax Carney testify at committee?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, when there are Canadians who oppose their policies, all the Conservatives know how to do is attack them. Instead of respecting people and their differences of opinions, the Conservatives go after them personally. That is not how leaders in this country should act.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that Canadians take it personally when, every time the Liberals given the opportunity, they do not help out Canadians but instead help out well-connected Liberal insiders, such as Mark Carney with his heat pump hustle. He is carbon tax Carney or conflict of interest Carney. It is stacking up in such a way that we cannot even keep track of all the scandals involving the de facto finance minister since the Prime Minister lost confidence in the finance

minister. Now Canadians want answers about the access that carbon tax Carney has been given and all the Canadian tax dollars he is lining his pockets with.

Will the Liberals just instruct the de facto finance minister to testify at committee?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, there the Conservatives go attacking private citizens. It just goes to show that anytime a Canadian citizen beats up against them, what do they do? They go on the personal attack.

I have a question for the Conservative leader. Why will he not get his security clearance? It is a question Canadians across this country are asking because they want to know what and whom he is trying to protect.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the government, taxes are up, costs are up, time is up and credit card fees are up. The government announced that it lowered credit card fees, but this announcement flopped like a soggy pancake. Stripe, where Liberal leadership candidate Mark Carney sits on the board, said savings will not be passed on to consumers because of "other rising costs". Even Liberal insiders tied to oligopolies know the government's announcements fall flat.

When will the government learn? It is not Carney that Canadians need, but competition, as well as a Prime Minister who will flip real results for Canadians and their families?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question on Canadians' minds this week is why the Leader of the Opposition will not get his security clearance. Every Canadian is wondering what he is trying to hide and what he is trying to protect. It is an easy thing to do. All the other leaders in this place have done it.

Why will the Leader of the Opposition not get his security clearance?

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the events of the past year and the announcement last week have shaken many Canadians, particularly those in Indo-Canadian and Sikh communities. Canada is a country rooted in the rule of law. The safety and security of our citizens is the top priority of our government.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs update the House on the additional steps our government has taken to protect Canadians?

• (1505)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course I will. As I mentioned, since the beginning, we have had three priorities: first, to seek the truth; second, to make sure we protect Canadians; and third, to defend Canada's sovereignty.

Based on information provided by the RCMP, we asked India to lift the diplomatic immunity on six of their diplomats. Unfortunately, India refused. Therefore, since Canadians' safety was at risk, I decided to expel them from Canada. I want to be clear: Canada does not seek diplomatic confrontation with India, but, of course, we will not sit idle with this information.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three weeks the Minister of Justice has been saying that it is the Quebec premier's fault that criminals are always back on the street without facing consequences for their crimes.

The Canadian Police Association and both Montreal's and Quebec City's *Fraternité des policiers et policières* supported my Bill C-325, which sought to correct the colossal mistake that was Bill C-5. The Liberals voted against it.

With the spike in crime in Quebec's communities, will the minister finally stand with us or does he believe that the police associations are out to lunch?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned several times to this member, we have to look at who is responsible for bail. When we made changes to the bail system, it was up to the provinces to implement those changes.

That being said, there needs to be enough space in the courts. There need to be enough Crown prosecutors to examine the files and make the submissions. There also needs to be enough room in the prisons for these people.

If the situations are not clear, then they will indeed have to, as I have said in three words, talk to Legault.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is bizarre that Canada's justice minister continues to blame the Quebec government for a crisis he created.

It was the Liberal government that tabled Bills C-5 and C-75. What is happening in federal prisons right now is because of Bill C-83. Everyone is complaining. Last year, even victims' groups like the *Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes*, the *Maison des guerrières* and the *Communauté de citoyens en action contre les criminels violents* supported us. Everyone from police officers to victims' groups agreed.

Why will the government not listen to us and kill Bill C-5?

Oral Questions

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. On this side of the House, we have invested \$390 million to fight guns and gangs. We have also increased penalties for certain crimes, such as auto theft. That member voted against that. We have also made it so that bail is not so readily available to people who repeatedly commit serious violent crimes.

These are the changes we have made. We now expect the Province of Quebec to do its share.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Petit Paris sawmill in Saint-Ludger-de-Milot shut down a day earlier than planned, putting 100 workers out of a job.

After the Liberal government's incompetence in negotiating the softwood lumber agreement, now the Minister of Environment is adding insult to injury with his order, which will kill 1,400 jobs. As everyone knows, the Bloc Québécois is no longer a party that defends the regions, and it seems dead set on keeping this government in power.

Why do the Liberals insist on hurting the forestry sector, which is an economic driver for our regions?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that we are working in close collaboration with all forestry stakeholders, including workers, businesses, communities, environmental groups and first nations.

We are also working with the Quebec government to find long-term solutions for sustainable forestry in Quebec.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen a rise in serious crimes targeting Sikh Canadians and the South Asian community, leaving many Canadians feeling anxious and unsafe. Last week, the RCMP confirmed that agents of the Government of India have been involved in these crimes.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please explain the steps the government is taking to ensure that all Canadians can feel safe in their communities?

Oral Questions

• (1510)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our colleague from Surrey—Newton for that question. He is right. Last week, the RCMP took the unprecedented step of sharing with Canadians information about a significant public safety threat. The alleged actions are a grave violation of Canada's sovereignty and the rule of law. We stand with the Sikh and South Asian communities with respect to ensuring their safety.

I want to thank all those involved in this complex investigation. The RCMP and its partners in the provincial and municipal police have done terrific work. Our priority is always the safety of all Canadians. The RCMP will work with us to continue to ensure that.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the multi-billion dollar telecom company Rogers said that its latest price hike is a result of the increasing cost of technology. Canadians are not buying it, but they are paying for it. They were misled. This is another ploy to get ripped off by Rogers, which just gouged out record profits.

The Conservatives will not stop Rogers from gouging Canadians. They will not risk losing the maximum donations they receive from the company's owner. The Liberals keep handing out millions of taxpayer dollars to Rogers, which is gouging those same taxpayers.

Why do the Liberals, like the Conservatives, ratchet up corporate greed at the expense of Canadians? Why will they not stand up to Rogers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of members here should take lessons from the NDP about standing up for what is right.

On this side of the House, we stand up for Canadians. We stood up to Rogers. We said no to its proposed merger. We imposed the harshest conditions in our nation's history on telecom.

We are always on the side of consumers. We want more competition in this country, more choices for consumers and lower prices for Canadians. Canadians know we will always stand up for them.

I think everyone should take a lesson from us in the House.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, last week, an IDF missile strike burned Palestinians alive at a hospital tent camp. This escalation of what the University Network for Human Rights has called a “genocide” only emboldens Hamas and does nothing to return hostages.

Canada's focus must be on achieving peace, including a true arms embargo, by advocating for Israel to allow humanitarian relief in and for an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories. When will the government's actions align with its words when it says “never again”?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Gaza is absolutely catastrophic. Too many innocent children, women and people have died. That is why we need the violence to stop. We need a ceasefire that is supported by the UN Security Council, including the U.S. We need hostages to come back home. Their families need to be able to see them and to love them. In the end, we need more humanitarian aid going into Gaza, and the government is working on this every single day.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I rise to propose that a standing committee on Canada-India relations be created. Therefore, if you seek it, you should find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House recognize: (1) Canada's Foreign Interference Commission has identified the Government of India as a possible foreign interference actor in Canada; (2) an October 2022 CSIS intelligence assessment stated that the Government of India proxy agents have provided electoral support to “a number of politicians at all levels of government”; (3) on October 14, 2014, the RCMP commissioner released findings indicating that agents of the Government of India were involved in serious criminal activity on Canadian soil, posing an ongoing and significant threat to safety; that the House appoint a special committee with a mandate to conduct hearings to examine and review all aspects of Canada-Government of India relationships, including, but not limited to, diplomatic, consular, legal, security, public safety, political and economic relations, provided that:

(a) the committee be composed of 12 members, of which six shall be from the government party, four shall be from the official opposition, one shall be from the Bloc Québécois and one shall be from the New Democratic Party; (b) the whips of the recognized parties shall deposit with the Clerk of the House the list of their members to serve on the committee within four calendar days after the adoption of this motion; (c) changes to the membership of the committee shall be effective immediately after notification by the relevant whips have been filed with the Clerk of the House;

(d) membership substitutions be permitted, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2); (e) the Clerk of the House shall convene an organizational meeting within one week after the adoption of this motion; (f) the chair of the committee shall be a member of the government party, the first vice-chair shall be a member of the official opposition, the second vice-chair shall be a member of the Bloc Québécois and the third vice-chair shall be a member of the New Democratic Party;

(g) the quorum of the committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118, provided that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when at least four members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government; (h) the committee be granted all the powers of a standing committee as provided in the standing orders, including the power to: (i) travel, accompanied by the necessary staff inside and outside of Canada; (ii) authorize video and audio broadcasting of any or all proceedings; (i) the provision of Standing Order 106(4) shall also extend to the committee;

(j) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; and, (k) any proceeding before the committee in relation to a motion to exercise the committee's power to send for persons, papers and records shall, if not previously disposed of, be interpreted upon the earlier of the completion of four hours of consideration or one sitting week after the motion was first moved and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

• (1515)

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

An hon. member: Nay.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Pursuant to subsection 4.1(3) of the Lobbying Act and Standing Order 111.1, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed reappointment of Nancy Bélanger as Commissioner of Lobbying for a term of seven years.

Pursuant to subsection 54(3) of the Access to Information Act and Standing Order 111.1, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed reappointment of Caroline Maynard as Information Commissioner for a term of seven years.

I request that these nominations and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

• (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and Standing Order 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 70th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its

Routine Proceedings

consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 70th report later this day.

* * *

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS' REMUNERATION ACT

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-415, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (flight attendants).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a bill to stop the exploitation of Canada's flight attendants. I want to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for seconding it.

Flight attendants have been exploited since the commercial aviation industry was launched because they were women. The exploitation continues today as billion-dollar airline companies profit off the backs of unpaid work. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have let this happen.

Today, flight attendants who work in a federally regulated industry are expected to work for free up to 35 hours per month. This must end, and it can end with the adoption of this NDP bill. It would ensure that for every hour worked, flight attendants are paid their full wage, and that a long-standing discriminatory practice is rectified.

I thank the Canadian Union of Public Employees, whose workers took a stand with a very successful campaign called "Unpaid Work Won't Fly". It has been an honour to work alongside them on this important legislation.

I call on the Liberal government to do what is right, adopt my bill as its own and take immediate action to make sure that unpaid work will not fly.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 70th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

[Translation]

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Routine Proceedings

• (1525)

[English]

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF ATTACK ON PARLIAMENT HILL

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of Oral Questions on Tuesday, October 22, 2024, the House observe a moment of silence for the 10th anniversary of the attack on Parliament Hill, that afterwards, a member of each recognized party, a member of the Green Party, and the Speaker, each be permitted to make a statement to pay tribute for not more than 5 minutes each.

[Translation]

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

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[English]

PETITIONS

WILD PACIFIC SALMON

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition from my constituents. I identify it as petition no. 12404906.

Petitioners express concern, as do British Columbians in general, about the plight of our west coast wild Pacific salmon. A deep concern about the Fraser River sockeye run led to the commission of inquiry referenced in the petition, chaired by Mr. Justice Cohen and put in place under the administration of former prime minister Stephen Harper. The results of that commission of inquiry have been in front of government since 2012. That was 12 years ago.

The petitioners continue to ask that all of the recommendations of the Cohen inquiry be implemented and that the government act immediately to implement all 75 recommendations.

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition submitted by hard-working firefighters from Burnaby IAFF Local 323 and Vancouver IAFF Local 18 along with 220 petitioners. This petition addresses an urgent issue impacting the health and safety of firefighters across Canada. I have sponsored this petition. It calls for immediate action to ban per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS, in firefighter gear and firefighting foam.

PFAS are man-made chemicals that are resistant to heat, water and oil. 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. Alarming, firefighters face a higher cancer risk than the general population.

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

MEDIA FUNDING

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present e-petition 5150, signed by over 3,000 Canadians who are expressing their disappointment in the production of *Russians at War*, a documentary film that spreads Russian misinformation and propaganda. Unfortunately, it was funded with taxpayer money through the Canada Media Fund and TVO.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to recover all of those taxpayer dollars. They are asking the government to audit all government programs that could possibly be used to the benefit of Russia and its misinformation campaign. They are requesting that law enforcement agencies like the RCMP and CSIS undertake an investigation of the filmmaker, who was an RT journalist, as well as others who participated in it within the occupied and invaded territory of Ukraine, to see whether Canadian, Ukrainian or international laws were violated.

Finally, they want to have all the materials that were filmed during production in Russian-occupied Ukraine to see if there is any evidence of Russian war crimes against the people of Ukraine.

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise this afternoon to present petition e-4974, initiated by Emily Johnson and signed by over 17,000 Canadians, which highlights the growing concern about exploitative practices of large food cartels such as Loblaw, which are clearly out of control. It underscores the monopolistic behaviour that allows these corporations to dictate prices and terms, pushing essential goods beyond the reach of many, especially low- and middle-income families.

This petition calls on Parliament to strengthen antitrust laws; investigate unfair pricing strategies, including price-fixing and shrinkflation; support smaller vendors; and explore price controls to prevent price gouging on essential food items. It also mandates that Loblaw and Walmart sign the grocery code of conduct. The goal is to ensure fair competition and protect consumers from price gouging on the basic food items needed to survive.

HOUSING

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition, with 237 signatures, highlights the urgent need to address Canada's housing crisis. Housing is a fundamental human right, yet many are unable to afford a safe place to live.

Since 2018, the number of unsheltered individuals has tripled in areas such as my riding of Hamilton Centre and the Waterloo region, where the petition's sponsor is from. This is driven by large corporate investors in real estate income trusts buying up all the affordable housing and raising rents. The petitioners recognize there have been decades of underinvestments, which has only worsened the shortage of affordable rentals.

The petition calls on the federal government to invest in non-profit housing, regulate REITs and remove their tax exemptions. The government needs to establish national rent control and introduce a homebuyers' bill of rights to make home ownership more accessible.

• (1530)

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise here today to present a petition from 118 firefighters in British Columbia. This petition addresses an urgent issue impacting their health. I want to thank the member for New Westminster—Burnaby for sponsoring this petition. It calls for immediate action to ban per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, in firefighter gear and firefighting foam.

PFAS are man-made chemicals known as “forever chemicals” because they build up in the environment and our bodies, and cause serious health issues. We have to help firefighters stay safe and healthy by regulating what we can control of their working conditions. Several countries have banned PFAS. Canada must follow suit. We have to protect those who risk their lives for us. This petition is asking for urgent action on this matter.

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

I rise for the 50th 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 alarmed by extreme levels of crime caused by the Liberal government's soft-on-crime laws, like Bill C-5 and Bill C-75. Bill C-75 allows violent reoffenders to be in jail in the morning and back in the community in the evening, and Bill C-5 allows criminals to serve their sentences from home.

It is no surprise that after nine years of Justin Trudeau's—

The Speaker: I am certain the hon. member caught himself on that issue of not mentioning names of members, but I will ask the hon. member to withdraw that and phrase it in the appropriate way.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that, after nine years of the Liberal government, Statistics Canada reports violent crime has risen by 50%. 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

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the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods and the community.

I support the good people of Swan River.

BRAIN CANCER

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. The petitioners note that an estimated 27 Canadians are diagnosed with a brain tumour each day. Canada is years behind the United States in approving new drugs and treatments, and there continues to be a shortage of brain cancer drugs in Canada.

Therefore, petitioners call on the Government of Canada to increase funding for brain cancer research; to work with provinces and territories to ensure that drugs, medical devices and new therapies are accessible to brain cancer patients nationwide; and to remove unnecessary red tape so brain cancer drugs can be approved expeditiously.

• (1535)

The Speaker: Before we move on to the next rubric, I would like to remind all members of the practice of the House when petitions are presented. First, clearly, we should not use the name of a particular member; we only use the name of their riding. Second, members should summarize the content of the petition as opposed to reading it verbatim. Third, the common practice is not to express whether the member agrees or disagrees with the content of the petition but just to present the petition to the House.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

RCMP ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received two notices for an emergency debate concerning the same subject. I invite the hon. members for Calgary Skyview and Burnaby South to rise and make brief interventions.

Privilege

The hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby South for also bringing this issue forward.

As per Standing Order 52, I propose an emergency debate, as per my urgent letter sent to you this morning, Mr. Speaker, on the concerning and ongoing interference by the Government of India in the lives of Canadians, which was recently alleged by the RCMP. The RCMP has gathered clear and compelling evidence that agents of the Government of India have engaged in and continue to engage in activities that pose a significant threat to the safety of Canadians, including coercive behaviour, extortion and involvement in over a dozen threatening violent acts, including homicide, targeting Sikh and South Asian Canadians.

All Canadians deserve to live free from fear and intimidation, and many of our constituents are feeling unsafe and afraid. As parliamentarians, our foremost duty is to represent the voices and concerns of our constituents, ensuring they are the heart of everything we do in this chamber.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for approving this emergency debate on this important topic in advance.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to request your consideration of an emergency debate on the issue of foreign interference and, very specifically, the RCMP's allegations of violence and chaos in our communities linked to the Indian government.

A week ago, the RCMP revealed chilling and disturbing information that Indian agents were engaged by Indian government diplomats in a campaign of terror in Canadian communities. This campaign included hiring and directing gang members to shoot at Canadian homes, to shoot at Canadian businesses, to extort Canadian businesses and to engage in car thefts and other criminal activities.

The Prime Minister testified at the Hogue inquiry into foreign interference that a number of parliamentarians, both current and former, have been compromised by foreign powers, including India.

Canadians have been killed on Canadian soil. Bullets have flown in Canadian communities. Businesses and business owners have been threatened. People have been killed. People have been extorted. This is something that makes all Canadians less safe.

It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to take these allegations of crime and threats of violence against Canadians very seriously. It is also the responsibility of members of the House to stand committed to denouncing the Indian government's alleged interference here in Canada and to show a united front, together, so that no one will suggest to the Indian government that people here are willing to turn a blind eye to these acts of criminality.

Given that, Mr. Speaker, I urge you to consider the letter I sent you this morning and grant the emergency debate for today to debate this very serious matter.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. members for Burnaby South and Calgary Skyview for their interventions. These requests meet the criteria, and I am prepared to grant an emergency debate regarding

the RCMP's allegations concerning foreign interference from India. This debate will be held later today at the ordinary hour of adjournment.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast work hard every day. They wake up early, put in long hours and make sacrifices to provide for their families. They play by the rules, pay their taxes and trust that their government is looking out for them. They expect honesty, integrity and accountability from the people who hold public office.

However, over the past nine years, that trust has been shaken. There is a growing sense that something is not right in Ottawa, that the NDP-Liberal government is more focused on helping itself and its friends than on serving the people who put them in office.

In my travels across Yellowhead, I have spoken with farmers, small business owners, parents and seniors, and they are worried. They are seeing that their hard-earned tax dollars disappear into programs and projects that do not benefit them or their communities. They are struggling with rising costs, inadequate services and a lack of support from the people in government.

They are asking me, "What is happening in Ottawa? Who is looking out for us?" They read headlines about scandals involving millions, even billions, of dollars. They see reports of funds mismanaged, conflicts of interest ignored and insiders getting ahead while hard-working Canadians fall behind. They wonder why their needs are overlooked while well-connected Liberals seem to have direct access to the government.

The choices the NDP-Liberal government has been making have real consequences for everyday Canadians, choices that favour insiders and special interests over the needs of regular people. While families are struggling to make ends meet, the government is spending recklessly, often without proper oversight or accountability. Communities are facing challenges like underfunded services, lack of infrastructure and insufficient support for those who need it most, yet instead of addressing these issues, the government seems preoccupied with helping its friends and maintaining its own power.

It is time to take a hard look at where our money is going and who is benefiting. It is time to ask whether this is the kind of leadership Canadians deserve. At the end of the day, it is about fairness. It is about doing what's right. It is about ensuring that Canada remains a place where everyone has a fair shot and where our leaders are held to the highest standards.

Canadians deserve a government that is transparent and accountable, a government that puts the interests of its citizens, not the interests of a select few, first. As representatives elected by the people, we have the duty to hold the government to account, to shine a light on misconduct and to demand better. We owe it to our constituents to fight for their interests, to be their voice in Ottawa and to work tirelessly to restore their faith in our institutions.

Today I want to address these concerns. I want to talk about pressing issues affecting Canadians, the mismanagement and misplaced priorities and the lack of accountability, because Canadians deserve answers. They deserve to know that someone is standing up for them, challenging the status quo and working to bring about the change that is so desperately needed.

● (1540)

Let us turn our attention to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, known as SDTC. This organization was established to foster innovation and to support sustainable technology, noble goals that Canadians can stand behind. However, under the Liberal government, SDTC became something far different. It is now being referred to as the green slush fund, for a good reason.

Reports have surfaced revealing that over \$300 million of taxpayers' money was involved in 180 cases of clear conflicts of interest with SDTC. That is \$300 million that could have been invested in communities, health care, education or infrastructure. Instead it was funnelled into ventures in which decision-makers had personal stakes. This is not just a minor oversight; it is a blatant misuse of public funds.

What is more troubling is that Liberal ministers were aware of the conflicts and did nothing to stop them. They allowed the mismanagement to continue unchecked. A senior civil servant even described the situation as "outright incompetence", pointing out that 123 million dollars' worth of contracts were awarded inappropriately. The Auditor General confirmed that the government's oversight was severely lacking, stating that the industry minister did not sufficiently monitor the contracts being handed out.

This pattern of negligence and favouritism raises serious questions about whom the government is really serving. While Canadians are forced to make hard choices every day to make ends meet, the Liberals seem more interested in enriching their insiders and friends. Imagine what \$300 million could have done for our country. It could have funded sustainable projects that genuinely benefited Canadians, created jobs or supported small businesses struggling in these tough times. Instead it was used to line the pockets of a select few.

The green slush fund is not an isolated incident; it is a symptom of a larger problem, a government that has lost touch with the people it is supposed to represent. Canadians are losing faith because they see a lack of integrity and accountability at the highest levels.

Privilege

We need to ask ourselves whether this is acceptable. Should we stand by while public funds are misused and trust is eroded? The answer is a resounding no. It is time for transparency, time for accountability and time for a government that puts Canadians, not the interests of Liberal insiders, first. The green slush fund is a stark reminder that we need change, a change that will restore integrity and ensure that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly.

Canadians have witnessed a series of scandals that reveal a constant disregard for ethics, transparency and accountability. Consider the WE Charity affair. The government attempted to hand over nearly \$1 billion to an organization with close personal ties to the Prime Minister's family. Members of his own family received significant sums in speaking fees from WE Charity. Despite this clear conflict of interest, the Liberals moved forward without proper oversight or transparency. It was only after public outrage and media scrutiny that they reversed course. This was not an innocent mistake; it was a deliberate attempt to channel public funds to people within their inner circle.

Then there is the SNC-Lavalin scandal. The Prime Minister's Office was accused of pressuring the Attorney General to interfere in a criminal prosecution of a well-connected corporation. This led to the resignation of high-ranking officials who refused to compromise their principles. It exposed a government willing to undermine the rule of law to protect their friends.

There is also the millions of dollars awarded in contracts to McKinsey without proper transparency or competitive bidding. At a time when Canadian businesses were struggling and could have benefited from government contracts, the Liberals chose to funnel money to a foreign firm with ties to their own party. This raises serious questions about their commitment to supporting Canadian enterprises and maintaining fair procurement practices.

● (1545)

These incidents are not isolated; they form a clear pattern of behaviour. The Liberals have repeatedly placed the interests of their friends and insiders above those of hard-working Canadians. This series of scandals reveals a government consistently sidetracked by its own ethical failings. Instead of dedicating its full attention to the pressing issues facing our nation, it is repeatedly caught up in controversies of its own making. This not only hampers its ability to govern effectively but also diverts valuable time and resources away from addressing the needs of Canadians.

Privilege

Canadians deserve leadership that is focused on and unwavering in its commitment to serve the public good. When the government's attention is consumed by managing scandals, then critical issues like health care, economic recovery and national security do not receive the full attention they require. This lack of dedicated focus hinders our progress as a nation and leaves many people feeling neglected and unheard. This is not just about politics; it is about principle. Canadians expect and deserve a government that operates with integrity, is transparent in its actions and is accountable to the people it serves.

The ongoing pattern of Liberal misconduct cannot be ignored or brushed aside. It is our duty to hold the Liberals accountable and to demand better on behalf of all Canadians. When government funds are mismanaged or siphoned off to benefit a select few, it is not just a matter of accounting; it is a direct hit to Canadians from all walks of life. The consequences of the Liberal government's actions are felt in every corner of our country, affecting families, workers and communities that rely on responsible governance to meet their needs.

Consider the challenges Canadians are facing right now. The cost of living is rising, with families struggling to afford basic necessities like groceries, housing and child care. Small businesses, the backbone of our economy, are fighting to keep their doors open amidst economic uncertainty. Our health care system is under strain, with long wait times and limited resources impacting the well-being of our citizens. When hundreds of millions of dollars are misallocated or lost to scandals like the green slush fund, that is money that is not available to address these pressing issues.

Imagine what could be achieved if these funds were managed wisely and directed toward initiatives that empower Canadians. We could implement policies to make housing more affordable, allowing families currently priced out of the market to purchase their own home and build a stable future. In health care, we could enhance patient care and reduce wait times by cutting red tape, improving efficiency and encouraging innovation within the system. By supporting educational choices and opportunities, we could equip our children with the tools they need to succeed in a competitive world. Investing strategically in essential infrastructure, like repairing aging roads and bridges and improving connectivity in rural areas, would bolster our economy and create jobs, all while ensuring responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

These are not complicated ideas. They are real needs that, if met, would significantly improve the quality of life for Canadians across the country.

Moreover, the mismanagement of funds undermines the trust that citizens have in their government. When people see their hard-earned tax dollars being misused, it leads to frustration and disengagement. They begin to question whether their sacrifices are valued and whether their voices are heard.

Seniors on fixed income worry about their pensions and access to health care. Parents wonder whether their children will have the opportunities they had. Young people question whether they can afford to start a family or buy a home. These are the everyday concerns that should be at the forefront of government priorities. In-

stead we are witnessing a pattern where the interests of Liberal insiders take precedence. This is not just unfair; it is unacceptable.

● (1550)

Canadians deserve a government that puts their needs first. They deserve transparency, accountability and assurance that public funds are being used to benefit the many, not the few. It is time to refocus on issues that matter most to Canadians: affordability, access to quality services and opportunities for a better future. We must commit to responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars, ensuring that every cent is directed toward making a positive difference in people's lives. That is the standard Canadians expect and the standard they deserve.

I want to take a moment to highlight a heartbreaking event that has deeply affected my community: the devastating wildfire in Jasper. This tragedy was not only the result of natural forces, but was made worse by government inaction and mismanagement, showing how misallocation of resources can have dire consequences. For years, experts warned about the risk of a catastrophic wildfire due to dead wood buildup and pine beetle infestation. Forestry professionals, local officials and residents urged the government to take proactive measures by implementing proper forest management and investing in prevention, yet these pleas were ignored as the Liberal government prioritized political optics over practical action.

However, the mismanagement did not end there. After the wildfire wreaked havoc, destroying a third of Jasper, displacing thousands and claiming the life of a brave firefighter, the government's response has been lacking. Recovery efforts have been slow and underfunded, leaving families without homes and businesses struggling to rebuild. Communities feel abandoned by those meant to serve them. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of dollars were funnelled into scandals like the green slush fund and over \$300 million was lost to conflicts of interest and mismanagement, funds that could have gone toward rebuilding Jasper, providing relief to affected families and restoring vital infrastructure.

It is disheartening that while our community was in crisis, resources that could have offered relief were squandered elsewhere. That is not about politicizing this tragedy. It is about misplaced priorities, a government more focused on its own interests than the urgent needs of its citizens. The people of Jasper are resilient, but should not have to face these challenges alone. They deserve a government that stands with them, providing the support needed to rebuild and recover. Transparency and accountability in allocating public funds are essential, especially when those funds could alleviate suffering.

This tragedy highlights the tangible cost of corruption and negligence, a stark reminder that decisions made in Ottawa have real consequences for communities. We must hold those responsible accountable and ensure that future funds are directed toward protecting and supporting Canadians, not lost to mismanagement. The people of Jasper and all Canadians deserve better. They deserve leadership that prioritizes their well-being and invests in their future. It is time to learn from this tragedy, reassess our priorities and commit to responsible government that serves the interests of all.

Canadians deserve a government that works for them, a government that is transparent, accountable and committed to serving the best interests of all its citizens. It is clear that the current direction is not meeting those expectations. We need to restore trust in our institutions and ensure that public funds are managed responsibly. That means ending the culture of mismanagement and entitlement. It means implementing proper oversight, enforcing ethical standards and holding those in power accountable for their actions.

Conservatives are committed to putting Canadians first. We will prioritize the needs of everyday people and not insiders with special interests. We will invest in our communities, support small businesses and ensure that essential services are adequately funded. We will take decisive action to protect our environment and prevent tragedies like the Jasper wildfire. Proper forest management and disaster preparedness will be top priorities, guided by expert advice and community involvement.

It is time for a change that brings common sense back to government, respects taxpayers and focuses on building a brighter future for all Canadians. Together, we can rebuild trust, restore integrity and move forward toward a Canada where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member drew our attention to past behaviour. We can learn a lot from past behaviour. We should look at Stephen Harper. He was the only prime minister who was held in contempt of Parliament. His parliamentary secretary is the leader of the Conservative Party today. On many of the issues the member talked about, we should look at why Stephen Harper was held in contempt. The current leader of the party was a great defender of that contempt.

We see the pattern continue today. The Conservative leader does not believe he needs a security clearance and feels he does not have to be accountable. Does the member have any sense as to why the leader of the Conservative Party today, for example, refuses to get a security clearance? Is it because he would not qualify?

Privilege

• (1600)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct regarding the pattern with the Liberal government, which is one scandal after another. Then, what did the Prime Minister do last week? He blew the doors wide open and said, “I think there has been some corruption here and foreign interference here and it is coming from the Conservatives, but I am not going to release names.”

Do members know why he is not willing to release names? It is because there are no Conservatives. That is the real issue that is going on. Just release the names. That is what Canadians want to hear. Which MPs or senators have been involved in foreign interference?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the member talking about awarding federal funds and transparency. In my community, the Anmore Community Hub was awarded \$1.5 million of ICIP funding, and there are reports in the community that kickbacks might have gone to the mayor and council. Now, the federal government offers no oversight to such corruption. With the need for even more community infrastructure investments in the future, do the Conservatives agree that more oversight is needed on these funds as well?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I am not disputing that we need to have oversight, but I am not certain if it was federal funding or provincial funding. If it is provincial, then it definitely would be under municipal affairs. Any time we are giving public funds, we need to make sure they are managed properly and allocated properly. Having oversight is a given, and we should always do that properly any time we are dealing with public funds.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I ascertain about the current Liberal government is how incompetent it is as a government. As a matter of fact, it quite clearly could be the most incompetent government in the history of Canada, whether that is regarding spending money or something else.

Let us just do a quick list, and I will talk about it more a bit later. There is the Winnipeg lab where the government actually hired Chinese spies of all things, and let them FedEx and Canada Post viruses back to China and then would not talk about it in Parliament. It is the same issue we have going on here where we are asking for documentation like we did back then. What did the Liberals do? They stalled and then they called an election. We actually brought someone to the bar over here, an unelected person, after over 100 years. This seems like déjà vu to me.

The hon. member mentioned Jasper and what a gong show it was for the government in how it handled it. It was completely shameful. How is it that the government is the most incompetent government in the history of this country?

Privilege

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the great speech that the hon. member had just talked about. It is very true that so many times I am out in the community and people just start saying, where is my money going? How is it being wasted once again when it goes to government in Ottawa?

That is the biggest problem and that is what people are really questioning. The current government has spent more than any other government in 150 years, in all of Canadian history. Therefore, is it any surprise that there are scandals happening? People are questioning, where is that couple of million going? A million dollars is nothing anymore with the current government. Even \$1 billion of wasted money is nothing anymore. We are at the tens of billions of dollars.

That is what Canadians want to know. They want to know where all this money is going and how it is that other Canadians are getting rich and they are suffering and paying for this and losing their jobs and homes over this kind of government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just could not help myself when I heard a few moments ago the member say, “release the names”. I feel as though he has spent too much time reading the memes that his party is creating in the back room back there. I mean, this member is a sitting member of Parliament. Does he not know that it would be illegal for anybody to release the names? Yet he comes in here and he makes comments like this as though it is actually possible. Guess what: Somebody can have the names. That is the Leader of the Opposition and all he needs to do is complete a security clearance.

The question from the parliamentary secretary a few moments ago was, why will the Leader of the Opposition not get his security clearance? Is he worried that he might fail it and he might not be given the clearance? Is there something in his history that is preventing him from actually getting the security clearance? That is what we want to know. Could the member not recite memes and rather just inform us why the Leader of the Opposition will not get a security clearance?

• (1605)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that he just had to stand up, that he just could not stand it anymore, really. This is what the hon. member does on a daily basis. It is almost laughable, what the member has brought forward.

It is funny, though, how just last week the Prime Minister stated that there has been foreign interference, and he knows where it is coming from but he cannot say. Actually, under the legislation, the Prime Minister has the authority to say. Then we could actually find out who these people are.

If we truly want to find out how foreign interference is affecting Canadians, then let the Prime Minister release the names and let them be judged accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. While a little banter is always okay, a lot of yelling is not. Let us keep the level down.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the topic of affordability in Alberta, CUPE Local 3550, representing over 4,000 educational assistants who make just \$27,000 annually, are fighting for better wages. They are fight-

ing for better work conditions, and they are fighting so that they can actually have a work-life balance.

This is an incredibly important issue that we are seeing. Almost 4,000 EAs are prepared to strike in Alberta on Thursday for better wages. The problem in all this is the fact that the province has instituted a 2.5% cap on their wages, which is nearly nothing.

Would the member agree that the most important part of getting good, powerful paycheques is actually supporting powerful unions?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I am not certain how this is a federal issue, but I guess I will answer that everybody who is working deserves to have a fair and equitable wage to make sure that they have a living.

One of the biggest problems that we have been dealing with here in Canada is our cost of living continually escalating year after year. Actually, I wish it was year after year, it is almost month after month that people keep going to the grocery store and they cannot believe how quickly the prices of everything keep rising.

I think we need to get rid of the government and have an election, so we can get some common sense back in this Canadian economy to have a standard of living that everyone wants.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I find interesting about this debate is that the Liberals admitted a long time ago that money was stolen. That is when they shut down the SDTC.

All we are asking is that the Liberals turn over the evidence of this theft to the RCMP. What the Liberals want to do is refer this to committee. When the member's constituents tell him that they have been stolen from, is his advice to call a committee or call the police?

• (1610)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. What does government want to do, and I do not care at what level? It is study things to death and not get any answers.

That is exactly what the Liberal government is trying to do: take it to committee so we can study it to death. We are saying it should go to the RCMP. It is the law in Canada, and it can deal with this properly. What are the Liberals doing? They are hiding behind government priorities or policies once again instead of getting the truth, which is what Canadians want to hear.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in this House to speak to the important issues of the day. However, in this case, there is a sad irony in that opposition members are not using that privilege to promote or oppose legislation for the betterment of Canadians, but rather are being forced to defend those privileges on behalf of the Canadians we represent and against the stonewalling government across the way.

Last week, the editorial board of *The Globe and Mail* wrote, “The Liberals’ naked disdain for Parliament [and by extension Canadians] is showing”. The Liberal government has such a profound disrespect for Canadians and for the long-held traditions of this place that it is choosing to defy not only the opposition, but the Speaker and, worst of all, Canadians themselves, who want and deserve to know the truth.

There is so much rot at the core of the government. The default toward secrecy and cover-ups, the antipathy toward law enforcement and the pattern of profound disrespect toward the people of Canada are all ingrained traits of the government and the failed and, as we can only be led to believe, corrupt Prime Minister, who has been the catalyst for a culture of cronyism, corruption and cover-ups.

This is nothing new. We are here today, as we have been for the last two weeks, debating the undebatable. The Auditor General has found that Sustainable Development Technology Canada appointed Liberals to run the program, who turned around and gave \$400 million of taxpayers’ money, the Canadian people’s money, to their own companies. The Auditor General found a whopping 186 separate conflicts of interest, and rather than comply with the Speaker’s ruling to produce documents related to the massive scam, the Liberals are choosing to hold up the business of the House indefinitely as they scramble to once again cover up their tracks.

This is not the first time the government has been accused of unethical behaviour. I know it is hard to believe, but it is true, and this is not the first time that government members have defied Parliament, defied the Speaker and even stonewalled the police in an attempt to cover up their sordid deeds. In fact, as I was preparing for this speech, when I searching in my emails and typed in the keywords “refusal to hand over documents”, what popped up was not about SDTC, which we are debating today, but another incident from back in 2021, when the government allowed Chinese spies, Beijing-sponsored scientists with ties to the Chinese military and bioweapons program, to access our top clearance national microbiology lab in Winnipeg.

The lead scientist, Dr. Qiu, at the same time as she was working in our top security level 4 lab, was flying back and forth to China for meetings in Beijing and helping Beijing set up its very own level 4 lab in Wuhan. At the time, the former Speaker ruled the government, his own party, to have violated parliamentary privilege and to be in contempt of Parliament when the Liberals refused to produce the documents related to this improper transfer of deadly Ebola and henipavirus samples from Winnipeg to Wuhan.

We still do not know how serious a leak that was because this House, through the Speaker’s predecessor, ordered the government to hand over the documents and the government refused. The Liberals sought to cover up the truth of what happened, not on the grounds of national security but for political reasons, because they were trying to protect the Prime Minister, who had failed so spectacularly to keep Canadians safe.

● (1615)

It is the same Prime Minister who refused to hand over documents to the RCMP in yet another case. Back in 2019, it came to light that the Prime Minister had pressured and bullied the former

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attorney general of Canada to give SNC-Lavalin, which was ironically also facing corruption charges, a sweetheart deal to drop the charges so as not to negatively affect the Liberals’ political fortunes in Quebec. She refused and he fired her, kicked her out of cabinet and eventually out of the Liberal Party. Clearly, there is no place for truth-telling and standing on principle in today’s Liberal Party, especially when it comes to standing up to the Prime Minister.

The worst part of that affair is that all of the members on the other side who were there, all of the hon. ministers, all backed the Prime Minister. In fact, at the time, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, then the minister of tourism, called what Jody Wilson-Raybould had done “fundamentally wrong”. She was telling the truth. How morally backwards does one need to be to look at that situation and say that the former attorney general of Canada, who upheld the law, should be ashamed? The foreign affairs minister has been touted as a future leader of the Liberal Party. She certainly seems to fit into the mould.

Speaking of backwards, members may recall that that same week, we had in this House about 50 young women as part of a delegation from Daughters of the Vote, a youth leadership movement, and they turned their backs to the Prime Minister in protest during his speech to the delegation. Jody Wilson-Raybould and the one woman in cabinet who had the courage of her convictions and the moral clarity to support her, Dr. Jane Philpott, were treated shamefully by their colleagues in the current corrupt government.

To bring it back to the point about the documents we are discussing today, the government was ordered to hand over the documents and refused. In fact, so desperate was it to cover up the misdeeds of the Prime Minister that it not only withheld documents from the House, but withheld documents from the Ethics Commissioner. In his 2019 report, Commissioner Mario Dion wrote, “I was unable to fully discharge [my] investigatory duties”. As we learned, later that year it also refused to turn over documents to the RCMP.

Documents released by Democracy Watch, via an access to information request, show that the Prime Minister’s Office refused to hand over documents to the RCMP when investigating the Prime Minister. I am really not sure what is worse here, the fact that the Prime Minister, who so clearly believes he is above the law, stonewalled the RCMP got away with it or the fact that the RCMP, under disastrous former commissioner Brenda Lucki, let him get away with it.

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Subsection 139(2) of the Criminal Code of Canada states that it is a criminal offence “to obstruct, pervert or defeat the course of justice”. In attempting to get the then attorney general to change her mind by attempting to convince her, the highest-ranking prosecutor in the land, to drop a criminal case for political reasons, it certainly appears that the Prime Minister and his staff were trying to obstruct justice. In fact, if we look at the RCMP report, we can basically paraphrase it as follows: The RCMP did not look at all the evidence because it could not get it because the government would not give it up, but it was probably just as well. That is shocking.

Then we have the ArriveCAN app scam, with an app that should have cost \$80,000 ballooning to \$60 million. The RCMP again opened criminal investigations into the actions of the Liberal government, 13 separate investigations at last count. There were allegations of identity theft, fraudulent and forged resumes, contractual theft, fraudulent billing, price-fixing and collusion, all with senior bureaucrats in and appointed by the government.

We could talk about WE Charity, with nearly a billion dollars handed over to an organization that paid nearly half a million dollars to the Prime Minister's family and paid for a lavish vacation for the then finance minister. Just on a side note, the then finance minister did repay the money he had been given for the cost of the vacation.

We could talk about how COVID contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars were handed out to Liberal cronies, who got richer while Canadians had to suffer. We all remember the \$237 million given to Baylis Medical, run by former Liberal donor and member of Parliament Frank Baylis.

- (1620)

Baylis donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Liberals and did he ever get a return on that investment. There was a \$237-million contract to produce 10,000 ventilators, which would normally cost about \$13,700. He billed the Canadian government \$23,750 a ventilator. If we do the math, that is \$100 million over and above a normal profit. There was another \$422,000 from the Department of Industry, the same department at the heart of the green slush fund. Frank Baylis has also expressed an interest, in recent days, in running to replace the Prime Minister.

There was also the \$84 million given to MCAP, the mortgage brokerage firm that employed the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford. Hundreds of millions of dollars from that period remain unaccounted for.

I just want to pause here and note that the Liberal sponsorship scandal, which brought down the last Liberal government, was a mere \$2 million. We know taxes are up, we know costs are up and now we know scandals are up. It is not \$2 million this time; it is billions of dollars that we are talking about. I guess Liberal inflation is even affecting scandals. Everything is either broken or more expensive under the Prime Minister.

At the time, even the CBC called the Prime Minister out. We know it has to be bad for the Liberals when the radical ideologues and propagandists at the CBC are willing to bite the hand that feeds them, generously feeds them in the case of the current government, and criticize the government.

On December 7, 2020, an aptly named series called “The Big Spend” started. It stated the Prime Minister's government “won't say who got billions of dollars in aid” and that “While some payments have been revealed, the destination of billions of dollars in aid remains secret.” Then it goes on to note, with some irony, that the Prime Minister ran on a promise of openness and transparency, a promise that he has broken, like so many. Sunny ways and sunshine are the best medication, are they not?

It used to be blackface. Now it is black ink on the scores of documents that the Prime Minister seeks to hide from Parliament, from the authorities and from Canadians. Every time the Liberals and their cronies get caught breaking the rules, they cover it up and refuse to tell Canadians the truth. Here we go again with another scandal, more Liberal cronyism and corruption, another cover-up, more blacked-out documents and more stonewalling.

What happened? The Liberals created a \$1-billion slush fund for funding so-called green technology projects and programs. They appointed Liberal insiders to run the program, but instead of helping Canadians, we know they were busy helping themselves. Just as with ArriveCAN and their crony COVID spending, the Liberals were helping Liberals get rich off the backs of struggling Canadians.

Just as with ArriveCAN and SNC-Lavalin, the RCMP is investigating corruption in the government. True to form, as with previous investigations, the Liberals are blocking the RCMP from getting the documents it needs to determine who in the government broke the law.

Like the Prime Minister and five of his ministers before, the Liberals' hand-picked chair of the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund, Annette Verschuren, broke the law. Canada's Ethics Commissioner has ruled that she violated subsection 6(1) and section 21 of the Conflict of Interest Act, finding that her actions “furthered her private interests”. To make matters worse, the Minister of Industry was warned of Verschuren's glaring conflict of interest but allowed her to keep her position until she was forced to resign. She only did this after being exposed for wasting Canadian taxpayers' dollars on projects that benefited her financially.

On top of this, the Auditor General found that over \$330 million in taxpayer money was paid out in 186 cases where there was a conflict of interest, with Liberal-appointed directors funnelling money to companies they owned, including Verschuren's. There was \$59 million given to ineligible projects that never should have been awarded any money at all. This is no small scandal. This is a big deal.

When this came to light, the Conservatives took action. Our job is to hold the government accountable, and that is what we are seeking to do with this privilege motion and this debate.

• (1625)

Back in June, all parties, with the exception of the Liberals, voted in favour of a motion requiring the government to produce documents related to the mass corruption at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It should be noted that the Liberals do not deny any of these allegations, and that makes this so much worse. It actually admits to the wrongdoing, but it is still engaging in a cover-up. The House, the majority of the members of Parliament, who are the people's democratically elected representatives, demanded on behalf of Canadians that these documents be turned over. Rather than comply, the government handed over redacted documents, or in some cases, refused to produce documents entirely.

The rules of parliamentary privilege are clear: The House has the authority, with its very broad powers, to request whatever documents it wants. It is up to the House to determine if those requests have been met to its satisfaction. The House has determined that they have not, so we sit here, day after day, asserting the moral right of the House on behalf of the Canadians who sent us here, including those who sent the government here and whom the government has abandoned. They are the Canadians whose money and trust it has treated with such carelessness and disdain. We demand answers, and we demand accountability.

Another scandal, which is criminal in nature, is the \$400 million in conflicts of interest. There we have the same model, with the same players and refrains of denial and distraction from the government benches. It is just sad. The saddest part of all is that we will probably be here again. I am not sure if it will be the \$10-billion conflict of interest they are setting up with Mark Carney, or on a much smaller scale, maybe the real Randy will finally stand up. Maybe the Prime Minister will finally tell us the truth about China. I do not know. What I do know is that, as long as the Liberals are in power, we will be back here again soon, doing something very similar to what we are doing right now.

The latest scandal has paralyzed the House of Commons from being able to deal with the issues that families are facing in Canada, including right here in Ottawa, like the cost of living, food inflation and the crime and chaos that are rampant in our streets. We know that everything is up. My constituents in Provencher know it. They talk to me about how their taxes are up. They talk to me about how the costs of everything they have to buy are up. They talk to me about how crime is up, especially rural crime. Then they add on, "And I think the Liberals' time is up, too." I cannot disagree with them. I also think the Liberals have exceeded their shelf life and their best-before date has come and gone, if there ever even was one.

As a result of the Liberals' entitled attitude towards accountability, we have crime and chaos in government. It is not so much the gravity of what they have done as much as the artlessness and the utter brazenness, along with the regularity of and the apathy towards their misdeeds, that has even the most jaded Canadians scratching their heads in disbelief. What started as a simple flouting of ethics rules for the Prime Minister with his taxpayer-funded vacation to a lobbyist's private island, for which he received the dubious distinction of being the only sitting prime minister in Canadian history to be found guilty of violating ethics laws, quickly unfolded into a pattern of cronyism, corruption, cover-ups and ethical viola-

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tions for the Prime Minister, his ministers and others in government. That is unprecedented in the history of Canadian politics.

There is a saying, and I read it again just recently, that anyone who can be trusted with a little, will be trusted with a lot. We have seen that over and over again in the Liberal government. We want to trust it because we, as members of Parliament, know how important trust is. We expect our constituents to place their trust in us to bring their cares and concerns to Parliament, to vigorously debate, to defend them and their rights, and to uphold the integrity of this place. We do that day after day. Our constituents expect that of us. We know that the trust they have in us is not something that we can take for granted because trust can be broken. When trust is broken, it is very difficult to repair. If we can be trusted in the little things, these big things that we are talking about would not even be an issue because we know that trust would carry on, even for the big things.

We know that after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, not worth the crime and not worth the corruption. Only common-sense Conservatives are standing up for Canadian families, and only Conservatives would end the Liberal culture of cronyism, cover-up and corruption. The Liberals must end their cover-up and hand over the documents to the RCMP so that Parliament can get back to working for the Canadians who sent us here.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to something one of the member's colleagues talked about, and that is past behaviour. There is an interesting book that lists 70 instances of abuses of power, corruption, just name it, with Stephen Harper. I quickly went through it, but it missed one of the largest ones, the ETS scandal, which was a \$400-million scandal. I do not think all the problems with Stephen Harper have been documented.

Why is that relevant? It is because the point person for Stephen Harper is today's leader of the Conservative Party. If we reflect on behaviour from the past, members of the Conservative Party need to look in the mirror and start asking questions of the Conservative leader, such as why he does not have the guts to get a security clearance and what he is hiding. Is there something about the leader of the Conservative Party's past that would not allow him to get the security clearance? Is that not a valid question, and should Canadians not have an answer to that?

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member for Winnipeg North ask that question over and over again today. What he is missing is that that is not what we are debating today. We are debating Sustainable Development Technology Canada's refusal to hand over the documents the RCMP has requested to investigate the corruption of the Liberal Party. It starts with the Prime Minister and his orders to his people. It starts with the Prime Minister's office and appointments to a corporation like that. That is where it starts. That is what we are debating today.

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Conservatives are asking for the documents to be produced so Parliament can get back to work and the RCMP can investigate. If there is nothing to hide, let the sunshine in.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been three weeks of Conservatives filibustering their own motion and debating with Liberals about who is more scandalous. When we have serious things happening right now, including foreign interference, the leader of the Conservative Party refuses to get a security clearance, but he continues to point fingers.

I am a Manitoban, and I know Manitobans are really struggling right now. The hon. member for Provencher voted against a guaranteed livable basic income, a school meal program, pharmacare and dental care. Conservatives say Canadians are struggling. I always hear them talk about food banks.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, now I am being heckled and called a socialist for trying to help people with the cost of living.

I am wondering if my colleague is ready to get back to work or if he is going to keep playing partisan games on the backs of Canadians.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg Centre asked the same question that the member for Winnipeg North did. I think she thinks she is in a different debate.

I will tell the member one thing. The member talks about her constituents, and within her constituency is an organization run by my good friend, Kent Dueck, which is called Inner City Youth Alive. For 25 years, he has worked with youth in the member's riding to bring them hope and healing from addiction and drugs. This last weekend, he received an award from Scott Gillingham, the mayor of the City of Winnipeg, for the good work he is doing in her riding, which she should be doing, and she is not.

There is another organization in her riding, which is run by Steve Paulson, called Adult and Teen Challenge. I visited it in the member's riding. It deals with individuals struggling with addictions to substances, alcohol and drugs, and crime. It is helping individuals to get out of that lifestyle, to get jobs and to become productive, contributing members of society.

That is what is happening in the member's riding, and she has nothing to do with that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have lived this nightmare before, this nightmare on Wellington Street.

We had a situation where two doctors at the level four laboratory in Winnipeg took deadly viruses to Wuhan, China. In 2019, they were arrested. By the time 2020 and 2021 rolled around, we finally had enough to establish that we needed the production of documents. At that time, the government also refused to provide the documents and went so far as to sue the Speaker of the House. What happened after that? The Liberals called an election to get out of it.

Why do the Liberals not call a carbon tax election now?

• (1635)

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate what a fantastic question the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke asked, as that really is the question.

Why not just call a carbon tax election? We will let Canadians decide if they trust the Liberals anymore and whether they want a total reset by putting Conservatives back in place. The Conservative Party is a party they can trust, a party with integrity, a party that gives them the hope that they will be able to take home powerful cheques that would provide for affordable housing and affordable fuel. Let us have a carbon tax election.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way Conservatives are going on and on, for days and weeks at this point, is such a joke.

Earlier, the questions asked were why this is going on and why can we not let the motion go to committee. A Conservative got up and said that they cannot let it go to committee because things would just get buried at committee. Do the Conservatives even understand what they are debating?

We are literally debating a motion to send this to committee. The members cannot say they want to debate this and then not expect an end result at some point or another. The whole point is to send it to committee, yet, by their own admission earlier today, the Conservatives are intentionally keeping it here in the House so it does not go to committee.

When the House leader and the NDP are saying that the Conservatives are just filibustering their own motion, they are absolutely correct. That is exactly what the Conservatives are doing, and that is all they are doing.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking for clarification as to why we are here today.

We are here today debating this because we have asked that the SDTC, the Prime Minister, the PMO, the Liberal government, call it whatever we want, to hand over unredacted documents pertaining to the origin and destination of the \$400 million that the Auditor General identified as being misappropriated. We want unredacted documents handed over to the RCMP. It is that simple.

If the government has nothing to hide, it can just let the sunshine in.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the member brought up the brazenness of this. It was an interesting observation on how we have this issue of scandal after scandal and violations of the privileges of elected members over and over again. He brought up the Winnipeg lab and much from the 42nd Parliament as well.

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It is as though the Liberals are just trolling us now. They do not even care anymore that their insiders voted to give themselves money with their insider dealings at SDTC. The House has voted to release the documents. We are debating a motion to send it to committee, but they do not need to do that. The Liberals could just release the documents, and then we could move on to the next scandal, which is about the two Randys.

Does the member have any comment on the brazenness of the conflicts of interest that occur under the Liberal government?

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, the question from the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge refers to something that I talked about in my speech.

I talked about the brazenness and the callousness with which the Liberal government operates, particularly the PMO and the Prime Minister. It is like it is with anything else as it starts off small. It started off with accepting a free vacation to the Aga Khan's Island. It started off with something small, and then it grew.

It is like a drug addict who starts off small. They start off with marijuana, which is something the Liberal government, coupled with the NDP, promoted and legalized. For most drug users I have talked to, it almost always started with marijuana, but it never ends there. It advances to cocaine, heroine and all these other very harmful drugs, such as opioids. I think people become numb after a while.

• (1640)

I think that is what has happened to the Liberals. They started out with small little scandals and have numbed their consciences. They have seared their consciences. They are not even capable of feeling guilt and remorse anymore. It is so sad, because there is hope for everybody, and I think there is hope for the Liberals too. Just let the sunshine in and—

The Deputy Speaker: I just realized, after five hours of sitting here, that it is actually the five-year anniversary of the class of 2019. I see a number of their faces here, so I just wanted to say happy anniversary to the class of 2019.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for pointing out, just moments ago, what the Conservatives are actually doing. We heard him here moments ago; he said that they just want to keep debating the issue until the Liberals cave to their demands. He just said what we have been accusing the Conservatives of all along: filibustering their own motion.

It is not about doing anything that is actually in the interest of Canadians. It is not about sending the issue to committee to be studied, which is what the motion is actually about. It is just about Conservatives' trying to fill up the airtime to prevent anything else in the House from happening. After three weeks, it had to happen eventually; one of them was eventually going to slip and reveal the reason they are doing this.

I would encourage people, folks watching this at home or people who want to review Hansard, to go back and look at what the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge said. He admitted that the Conserva-

tives do not want the issue to go to committee; all they want is for the government to concede or for the government to deliver on what they are asking for. However, that is not what the motion is about. The motion on the question of privilege is about sending the issue to committee so the committee can do its work and send it back to the House so the House can vote on it again.

The member for Calgary Rocky Ridge knows that. Every single Conservative here knows that. Instead, what they are doing is intentionally trying to filibuster this place. They are doing all of it at the expense of getting actual work done for Canadians.

I do not have a lot to say on this. I have quite enjoyed watching Conservative after Conservative get up and ramble on in speeches that are written by somebody probably in a basement room around here somewhere. Some of them, I recognize, have probably not even read the speech once before they read it here. We can tell by the way it is written that they are all written by the exact same person.

I want to let them continue doing that, but I do just want to take the opportunity to thank the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for finally admitting to the House what the Conservatives are doing and how they are purposely trying to filibuster and delay this place so we cannot do work on behalf of Canadians. He was honest about it. He said it in his question. I know that he is going to want to try to ask me a question when it is time, but the reality is that there is nothing he can say that is going to reverse what he already admitted, which is what their tactic on this whole thing has been.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously he did not listen to my speech this morning, where I actually expanded on the topic of the nature of the debate quite extensively. He is also taking enormous liberty with what I said on the record. He can maybe go back to Hansard and look at what I actually said, if he would like.

The point is that there is a choice between sending the motion to committee to study the issue of the government's contempt of Parliament, and the Liberals' just ending their contempt of Parliament and tabling the documents. Indeed if members, who are elected to this place, want to debate this, as he is doing, then they are welcome to do so. When that debate is exhausted, we will go to committee unless they table the documents.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I did not have to listen to his speech this morning, because I have listened to the same speech over and over, written by the same person somewhere in a basement, operating on behalf of the Conservative Party. However, I do want to thank the member for just doubling down on what I already called him out on. He basically just said it again: We are debating this only because we just have to debate this and it would just go away if the Liberals would actually deliver on what we are requesting of them. That is what he just said.

By his own admission, not once but twice now, he is doing exactly what we are accusing him of doing, which is intentionally filibustering this place, preventing us from doing any work whatsoever. This is just so the Conservatives can keep up the charade of trying to make it look like they are doing something meaningful, when really they have an ulterior motive: to completely put this place in a position of being unable to get anything done.

Privilege

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that the original motion states that the issue should go to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The RCMP, the Auditor General of Canada and other stakeholders have said that the tactic the Conservatives are using is wrong; it is questionable and it should not be done. It is an abuse of power. All of that is what is being implied.

The Conservatives moved the motion to have it go to committee, then when they ran out of speakers, they moved an amendment, and now we are speaking to an amendment to an amendment. Why is that? It is because of what the member is actually talking about: The Conservatives have not put the interest of Canadians in their hearts. What they have put in their hearts is just the Conservative Party of Canada and nothing else.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. I heard Conservatives say today that when there is a problem, we call in the police. Yes, of course we call in the police, but we let the police do their own work. I ask the former prosecutors who are sitting in the House right now whether it is the job of the public to do the work for the police. Is it the job of the House to do the work for the RCMP? No, of course it is not.

The RCMP has the tools necessary to get the information it wants. When and if the RCMP decides it wants that information, it will know how to get it. The RCMP does not need the House to somehow inform it how to get evidence or what evidence it should be getting. What the Conservatives need to do is listen to the RCMP, to the Speaker's ruling and to just about every expert on this who has said that there is a constitutional way to do this that involves the RCMP's actually doing its work. We do not need to step outside the Constitution for the RCMP to be effective at what it is doing.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, again, we will just let the record show that the member believes that if other members of the House of Commons, who have been elected, wish to debate the motion, there is something horribly wrong with that and that the members should be silenced in order for the issue to be dealt with before debate has been exhausted.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, we know it has really stung when the member has had to get up three times to debate me on this.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to track back on the point about how the RCMP gathers evidence, particularly the issue of the tainting of evidence and the issue that if in fact the Conservatives have their way the prosecution of the entire case will be compromised—

Mr. Frank Caputo: How? How?

Mr. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, it is because the evidence will have been obtained in an improper fashion.

A simple legal procedure that does not seem to be understood by the other side is that if the Conservatives proceed in the fashion that they intend to, then the entire prosecution, if there is one, will be compromised.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, what I find most alarming about what I just heard was the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, a former prosecutor, heckling “How? How?” when the member from Scarborough was trying inform people about why there might be improperly gathered evidence.

He is absolutely correct, but we do not need to take this from the member from Scarborough or from myself. Listen to the RCMP, which is saying that. Listen to the Speaker's ruling, which is saying that. Listen to the countless experts who are saying the exact same thing, which is that the RCMP has an opportunity to get the information, that it knows how to collect evidence and that it does not need Parliament telling it how to collect evidence or what evidence it should be gathering.

The RCMP is very capable of doing its job. It knows what to do and how to do it. It is very effective at it. The RCMP certainly does not need the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge or the entire Conservative caucus leading the investigation for it. The RCMP knows what it is doing, and I have great confidence in the RCMP. I would hope my Conservative colleagues would feel the same way.

• (1650)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I am really glad to see that the member for Kingston and the Islands has really got his gusto back after his two-week hiatus, given the whole Kat Kanada thing.

Be that as it may, I am wondering whether he could tell us what charter rights are engaged. Given that he has come in to this place and told us how the law works, I am curious what charter rights are engaged and how they would impact a potential prosecution. I would like him, please, to give just the charter section numbers.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, this is the problem with Conservatives. This is what they are continually doing. I do not have to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I will let the hon. deputy House leader respond.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I do not have to cite specific charter references to be able to agree with you. Do I know the exact numbers? Of course I do not, but what I have been doing is listening to the RCMP, listening to and reading the Speaker's ruling and listening to the experts who have very clearly said this.

I apologize profusely to the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo that I just do not believe him and that I would rather take the word of the RCMP, would rather listen to the experts and would rather listen to you, Mr. Speaker, and the countless pieces of legal advice you received in making a ruling.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the member for Kingston and the Islands would recognize he is just totally off the mark. He is huffing and puffing and trying to blame the Conservatives, when really it is the Speaker's ruling that is saying that the documents need to be produced.

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My question is this: Are the Liberals planning to take the Speaker to court, as they did previously to the other Speaker who ruled against them?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it is your ruling, and what you said in your ruling was that this was unprecedented but that you agreed that it should go to PROC, which should be allowed to determine the best way to deal with it. I love how the member cherry-picks the sentences or half sentences that he wants to use in here today, but the reality is that for him to come in here and say it is the Speaker's ruling and they are just listening to him is completely ludicrous, because what they are actually doing is ignoring the majority of the direction you have given in your ruling.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this place and speak on behalf of the constituents of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner. Unfortunately, rather than speaking about something fantastic that the government may be doing to better Canadians, we are here to discuss yet another scandal. That is right, another Liberal scandal: more corruption regarding the gross misappropriation of taxpayer funds, with a typical Liberal response of “Cover it up. Nothing to see here”. That is what we are doing.

I know that with all the Liberal scandals that have been going on, it is hard to keep track of everything, so let me clarify that what I want to talk about today are the Auditor General's findings that Liberal insiders at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, or as I would refer to it, the green slush fund, gave nearly \$400 million in tax dollars to their own companies with over 186 conflicts of interests, all at a time when Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves. SDTC was a federal foundation that was supposed to support small and medium-sized businesses in the clean-tech sector by funding projects that were to develop technology that benefits the environment. The members of the Liberal-appointed board violated conflict of interest laws and turned it into a green slush fund for the Liberal elites.

On June 10, a Conservative motion was adopted by the House, calling for all documents relating to the green slush fund to be tabled within 30 days and eventually turned over to the RCMP. Thankfully, the motion was passed, despite the Liberals voting against it. That was another desperate attempt to cover-up. The Liberals responded to this motion on July 17, August 21 and September 16, but there were only portions tabled. There was partial disclosure due to either redactions or the withholding of documents. In other instances, the House order was met with a complete refusal by those departments.

According to the Speaker's ruling, the law clerk reported back to the Speaker that the Liberals had not complied with the House order by the stipulated deadline of 30 days following the adoption of the motion. In response to the Liberals' refusal to disclose documents, the House leader for our Conservative opposition raised the question of privilege, arguing that Parliament's powers to order the production of documents are absolute and the government cannot disregard this binding order.

As parliamentarians, we have a right to ask for any documents to be produced that are necessary for us to fulfill our duties to Canadians. Therefore, on September 26, the Speaker ruled that the Liberals' failure to produce documents relating to the green slush fund

scandal constituted a prima facie breach of privilege. As such, all debates are suspended until this matter is resolved. That is going on four weeks now. If parliamentarians do not have the rights and freedoms necessary to do their jobs, Parliament is paralyzed, as it is now, but the Liberal government seems to be okay with wasting taxpayers' money and government's time.

The Speaker ruled that “The House has the undoubted right to order the production of any...documents from any entity or individual it deems necessary to carry out its duties”. In his ruling, he further stated that “The House has clearly ordered the production of certain documents, and that order has clearly not been fully complied with.”

• (1655)

In yet another attempt to obstruct the investigation, the Liberals have made the argument that since this motion calls for documents to be turned over to the RCMP, the motion would be inadmissible or out of order. However, the Speaker ruled that he did agree that “It is indeed unusual, novel and unprecedented for the House to order documents not for its own purposes but for a third party.” However, the Speaker also added that “I believe the best way for this to be achieved would be to follow the usual course for a prima facie question of privilege”. I would also argue that what is unusual and unprecedented is for the RCMP to have to be investigating a government over and over again with so many conflicts and absolute corruption.

For a government that claims to not be responsible for this scandal to then go to such lengths to try and cover it up instead of fighting on behalf of Canadians to get the truth out makes no sense to me. If the Liberals had nothing to do with this \$400-million scandal, they should be as concerned as the rest of us about this gross corruption and theft of taxpayer money. One would think that a responsible government would take the lead on holding those responsible to be accountable for their actions and not be forced into responding appropriately. Liberals insiders have stolen \$400 million from hard-working Canadian taxpayers, yet this Liberal government is doing everything in its power to prevent the House from gaining access to those documents.

In response to our demands that they give Canadians the answers they deserve, the Liberals have flat out refused, obstructing a criminal investigation into this misappropriation of public funds. The Liberals claim that this matter should be discussed in committee, because they think that nobody there will notice. However, I do not agree with that. The House has already passed a motion and the Speaker has made his ruling. The House is the place for the matter to be resolved, not at committee. This brings us to the privilege motion in front of us today.

Privilege

Parliamentary privilege is the individual and collective rights that we, as members of the House of Commons, have that allow us to effectively carry out our principle functions to legislate, deliberate and hold the government to account. Parliamentary privilege dates back to the 17th century when the people of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom fought to protect their power from the king. In Canada, parliamentary privilege is part of our Constitution. It is essential for maintaining the power and authority of the House in allowing members of Parliament to represent their constituents fully. It is called “democracy”.

Violating parliamentary privilege is no small thing. It means that the government cannot govern and the House cannot fulfill its duties to the Canadians we represent. When parliamentary privilege is breached, our constitutionally guaranteed rights as parliamentarians are disregarded.

We are left to wonder what could be so bad about what is contained in these documents that the Liberals have resorted to breaking parliamentary privilege and obstructing a criminal investigation to keep them hidden. I think Canadians know why. They know that these documents contain evidence of significant corruption. So far, we know that the report showed \$400 million in tax dollars was misappropriated and there were 186 instances of conflicts of interest with the awarding of contracts.

Further, for a fund dedicated to supporting the development of new sustainable technology, \$59 million of this green slush fund went to 10 ineligible projects. As the Auditor General said, “the projects did not support the development or demonstration of a new technology, or their projected environmental benefits were unreasonable.” Not only were funds misappropriated to Liberal insiders, they were given to projects that were not even relevant to the goals of the fund.

- (1700)

Even more shocking is that the Auditor General's report found that the Minister of Industry did not sufficiently monitor any contracts from Liberal insiders. Why is no one in the government doing anything to get to the bottom of this gross misuse of taxpayer money? What makes this all so much worse is that the \$400-million slush fund scandal comes at a time when Canadians face an economic crisis. Canadians are feeling the financial impacts of the government's policies over the last nine years. Not shockingly, the Liberals do not seem to care.

When I think of my riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, it pains me to think of the hard-working Albertans who are struggling with the cost of living crisis under the tax-and-spend Liberals. If we then add the carbon tax the government has implemented, it adds to my constituents' struggle to fill their gas tanks; heat their homes, businesses and barns; dry their grain; buy groceries and so much more.

Let us imagine how much the \$400 million would impact the lives of Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet under this economic burden. How many additional doctors and nurses, or equipment, could we add with \$400 million to help Canadians access health care? How about our school systems? How would \$400 million invested in our communities impact the number of teachers, teachers' aides and school programs for our children?

The average Canadian family now spends more of its income on taxes than on basic needs, such as food, shelter and clothing. Canadians also cannot afford housing. In 2024, the number of chronically homeless people increased by 38% relative to 2018. We have 61% of young Canadians age 18 to 34 who are concerned about their ability to pay their mortgage or rent over the next 12 months, and 28% say they are considering moving to another country for greater affordability.

It is shocking that during a time when Canadians are experiencing a once-in-a-generation cost of living crisis because of the out-of-touch government spending, the Liberals dare to allow \$400 million of taxpayer money to line the pockets of their friends and insiders. They are absolutely out of touch.

It does not stop there. The affordability crisis is affecting Canadians in every aspect of their lives. Food Banks Canada's 2024 Poverty Report Card shows that almost 50% of Canadians feel financially worse off compared to last year, and one in four Canadians are experiencing food insecurity. Under the Liberal government, Food Banks Canada reported that food banks have seen a 50% increase in visits since 2021.

It is shameful that while Canadians are struggling to meet their basic food and housing needs, the government's priority continues to be lining the pockets of Liberal elites. The \$400-million green slush fund scandal, along with all the other scandals, demonstrates the Liberals have no respect for the hard-working Canadians who dutifully pay their taxes every year.

I have questions for the members present on the other side of the House. How do they respond to their constituents who are facing challenges in feeding their families, keeping their homes or ensuring their loved ones' safety? How would they explain to their constituents that the \$400 million they earned benefited the Liberals' friends, instead of assisting those in need? Can members look their constituents in the eye and assert that the \$400 million was spent more wisely than if it had been spent on the constituents who earned it and are currently struggling?

The members on the other side of the House have overlooked the fact that we serve the Canadian public and that taxpayer funds do not belong to the government. These funds are the property of Canadians. It is unimaginable, unethical and corrupt to use Canadian taxpayer dollars in this manner and then fail to acknowledge that these funds have been misappropriated. On top of that, the Liberals are actively trying to cover it up. They are obstructing a criminal investigation into this matter.

I want all members of this House to imagine what \$400 million could do in their riding. Unfortunately for Canadians, on top on the misappropriation of \$400 million, the Liberals are stalling the work of this House on important issues by refusing to co-operate and they are effectively paralyzing Parliament, sidelining our efforts to tackle the rising cost of housing, food inflation and issues of crime that Canadians care about.

• (1705)

Speaking of crime, in Alberta alone, the total number of violent Criminal Code violations is up 37%; total violent firearms offences are up 118%, and extortion is up 410%. Law enforcement, from coast to coast to coast, is crying for support. Law enforcement officers feel the impacts of the government's soft-on-crime policies first-hand. Whenever I check the news, I am appalled to see stories of individuals out on bail who are recommitting offences, making our communities less safe and putting our law enforcement officers at risk. Speaking of risk, an officer was shot in broad daylight in the GTA by an offender charged with 41 offences; hours previously, after being taken into custody, he was released on bail.

The \$400 million that was given to Liberal insiders could have been invested in making our streets safer, but no, the Liberals thought it was better spent on their friends. Canadians are worried about increased thefts and crime rates. They should not have to worry about their government stealing from them too.

There is also a drug crisis across the entire country. There are 47,000 people who have died from opioid-related deaths in the last nine years. That is more deaths from opioids alone than all Canadian deaths in the Second World War. If we think about it, that is inconceivable. That is all thanks to the Liberals' failed approach to the so-called safe supply and tax-funded drugs. Can members imagine how much good \$400 million could do for treating those with mental health and addictions struggles?

In addition to the issues faced at home, the Prime Minister and his Liberal government have embarrassed Canadians on the world stage. Three months ago, the Liberal defence policy update revealed that Canada is nowhere close to its 2% NATO commitments. That hardly comes as a surprise from a government that has repeatedly failed the Canadian Armed Forces in recruitment, procurement and every other way. We are short almost 16,000 troops, with a further 10,000 undertrained and undeployable. Our warships are rusting out. Our fighter jets are worn out. Entire air squadrons have been shut down because they do not have enough personnel. If the government had been serious about our national defence, it could have committed the \$400 million to support our troops and come a little closer to meeting our NATO goals.

I really wonder what the NDP-Liberals have done right in the last nine years. Things are clear. Crime is up and costs are up; quite frankly, I think time is up. Canadians are sick of the rising costs of crime, chaos, corruption and international embarrassments. They are ready for a change, for a government that will bring common-sense leadership back to this country.

On this side of the House, we are ready to form a government that will work for Canadians, not steal from them. We will reduce the cost of living and reward work and investment. Conservatives are ready to fix the budget by cutting waste, capping spending, in-

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vesting in economic growth and cutting taxes. We will reduce bureaucracy, sell off federal buildings and invest in the building trades so that we can build homes. We will repeal senseless, soft-on-crime policies and catch-and-release laws, reinforce our borders, stand up for law-abiding firearms owners, focus on the real criminals and improve our national security. When we form government, we will ensure accountability and transparency. Canadians deserve to know where and how taxpayer money is being spent.

These matters involving the green slush fund are criminal, and an investigation is needed and expected by Canadians. The government needs to come clean with Canadians and finally reveal the truth. It is time for the government to end the cover-up and corruption and provide the documents, so Parliament can get working for Canadians.

• (1710)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to direct my comments to my friend, who is a former RCMP officer. In particular, I want to direct his attention to a letter by Mike Duheme, the RCMP commissioner. I am going to work on the assumption that, as a police officer and a member of this chamber, he wishes to see justice, with the perpetrators of this alleged crime brought to court and successfully prosecuted. However, Commissioner Duheme indicates in his letter that proceeding in the manner in which the hon. member wishes would taint the evidence and effectively destroy whatever possibility there is of obtaining a prosecution.

He stated:

The RCMP has also reviewed the implications of the Motion in a potential criminal investigation. Before taking any investigative steps...the RCMP must comply with...legal standards [of] investigation or prosecution... For the reasons set out above, the RCMP's ability to receive and use information obtained through this production order and under the compulsory powers afforded by the Auditor General Act...give rise to concerns under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is therefore highly unlikely that any information obtained by the RCMP under the Motion where privacy interests [exist] could be used to support a criminal prosecution or further a criminal investigation.

In other words, if this motion proceeds in the way the hon. member wishes it to do, there is no chance—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, while I have a lot of respect for Commissioner Duheme, it appears that the response was actually read by a lawyer in the PMO.

It is very easy to understand. One would think that the Government of Canada should be the complainant because of the fact that \$400 million was misappropriated under its watch.

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I was not in the RCMP; I was in a municipal police service, a great one. When I did investigations, a complainant turned over documents to the police to investigate. The government is not acting like a complainant in this matter. It is acting like an accused. That is what is really going on here.

The government has reason to be concerned about the evidence being gathered if it is the accused. The fact that it is not turning stuff over—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, he asked a question for almost two minutes, so I am going to take some time to answer.

The government has a responsibility to turn over evidence. If it is acting as the accused, the police could get an order to obtain the evidence from the House of Commons. That is not unreasonable. That, in my opinion, would taint no one's charter. It would not taint an investigation. It would not lead to an illegal precedent that would not allow someone to have a fair prosecution of a case, unless, of course, it is the government and members in the government who are at fault.

If the documents continue to be withheld, it would lead me to believe that there is someone in government who has a lot to hide, and they had better get themselves a good lawyer.

• (1715)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative filibuster is trying to figure out who is more scandalous, the Liberals or the Conservatives, and I would argue both.

I also want some answers. My hon. colleague was a former RCMP member. The RCMP reported that it obtained evidence that demonstrates four very serious issues in regard to India. I am going to read them verbatim:

1. Violent extremism impacting both countries;
2. Links tying agents of the Government of India (GOI) to homicides and violent acts;
3. The use of organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian Community in Canada; and
4. Interference into democratic processes.

We are talking about justice, and we are talking about getting to the root of things. It brings us to this question: Why will the leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton, not get his security clearance to find out who in his party has been implicated, potentially, in foreign interference? Why?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, a number of things come up with this particular issue.

It is important to realize this: It has been made very clear that, if the Leader of the Opposition or a leader of any party, other than the Prime Minister in his role, receives this security clearance to have access to the names of those who might be wittingly involved in foreign interference, they are gagged. It is effectively impossible for them to answer questions or to deal with it.

I will quote the chief of staff to the Prime Minister, who said, "The recipient is prevented from using the information in any manner, even were it in the case of briefing political parties on sensitive

intelligence regarding [an] MP". This "could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process."

It is important to realize all of these accusations. The Prime Minister grandstanded under oath at the Hogue commission and misled the committee in public. If he has all this information, why does he not release the names? If there are Conservatives on the list, we will deal with it. I think the Prime Minister knows by the names that his own party has some skeletons in the closet.

I support the Conservative leader not taking this, because he can then act and speak. Being gagged is another trick that the government does not want Canadians to be aware of.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will go back to the response that the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner gave to the member for Scarborough—Guildwood. He raised a question that was for the arguments to be made on the original motion that the House has already pronounced on. The ship has sailed as to whether Parliament should receive the documents. The question is now around contempt and the government's refusal to comply with an order of Parliament, not whether it should.

Could the member get us back to the actual debate around the fact that the government has refused an order of Parliament, not whether the government should comply with it?

• (1720)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I particularly enjoyed the hon. member's intervention earlier today, and it is along those same lines. Canadians are wondering about the contempt of the government in taking this position. The Speaker has already ruled, as my colleague indicated, that the unredacted documents need to be produced. If the government does not do that, what message is being sent to the Canadian public? Contempt of Parliament leads Canadians to believe that the Liberals are complicit in this wrongdoing and corruption, that they have something to hide and that they are not acting in a responsible manner to the Canadian taxpayer. This is something we have seen in their spending for the last nine years.

All the cover-ups and contempt really sour the Canadian public to the current condition of the government, even more than they are already, and show the fact that Liberals cannot be trusted.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite implied in his comments that it was the Prime Minister's office that wrote the letter, and I think he owes the RCMP an apology for making that assertion. Would the member apologize for his comment about the chief commissioner in the letter he provided?

Mr. Glen Motz: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not apologize. I said it appeared as if it were that way. There is a party line to be held, and it appears as if the commissioner has something to say. I am sure this is under the direction of the PMO. There is no evidence to support what the member said, because that is not what we are asking for.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussion among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order, or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 52 later this day, no quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

[Translation]

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

[English]

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to represent the good people of Peace River—Westlock in the House of Commons and to bring my voice and their voices to the privilege debate.

The term “privilege” is common parlance these days, and folks here like to talk about their privilege. Sitting in this seat is a privilege. Being a member of Parliament is a privilege and it comes with privileges. One of those privileges is that we get to asked pointed questions of the government. That essentially sums up what the privilege debate we are having today is about: the House of Commons and members of Parliament. The people sent here, elected by their constituents, come to this place to hold the government to account, to ask the government tough questions and to demand a rationale for why things happen or do not happen. That is what we are after today. This debate comes down to the fundamental role of what Parliament is. Parliament is the check and balance on the government.

It is a bit confusing. A lot of times folks say that I am part of the government, and I always correct them and say that I hope to be soon, but at this point I am a member of the opposition. It is a bit confusing because the government lives in the legislative body in

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our parliamentary system, and the government is captured by the cabinet and the Prime Minister and the apparatuses of government outside of this place. It is our job as members of Parliament to hold the government to account, to make sure the government is doing the things it ought to be doing.

Being in government comes with great privileges, and one of those privileges is holding the debit card of the nation. The government knows the PIN for the debit card of the nation. However, the Liberal government seems to have written this PIN on the backside of the card and then handed the card out all over the place, with no real concern as to who gets access to it and where money is being spent. That is what we are after.

In this place and in government, we run across acronyms of all sorts. The acronym SDTC has come up a lot in this debate. For folks back home watching this, SDTC is Sustainable Development Technology Canada, an organization that was tasked with providing money to organizations that are doing research on sustainability. It has been redubbed the green slush fund because it seems to have been left unchecked by the government.

Some might say that this was not the government; it was an outside organization with a board set up by the government. However, I would point out that most of the people appointed to this board who were making decisions had strong Liberal ties. In many cases, being appointed to this board seemed to have been a reward for past loyalties. That has been pointed out a lot.

• (1725)

The other very interesting thing to note, for those trying to make the case that this was outside the government and the government did not necessarily know about it, is that the deputy minister, who reports directly back to the minister, the person right next to the minister, attended these meetings and would have taken notes, and his or her opinion on these things would have been taken into consideration. The deputy minister represents the minister, so they would have reported back to the minister what took place at these meetings and would have been there to advise the board as to the directions of the minister. The minister can say that he took a hands-off approach, and that is fine, but he still knew what was going on.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, who has done incredible work on bringing this to light. It should be recognized that to some degree, bringing this scandal to light, in light of all the other scandals, has been a challenge. I commend him for his work, because it seems like every other week there is another major Liberal scandal breaking. People have become tired of the scandals that have rocked the government.

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We do not need to go too far back to remember the SNC-Lavalin scandal, over which an indigenous woman lost her cabinet position. She is no longer a member of Parliament because of that. The government was trying to manipulate the justice system. We can look back at the WE Charity scandal as well, where the government tried to give away the debit card with the PIN written on the back for \$1 billion, again with no accountability. Then we have the Baylis medical scandal. For those who do not know about it, a former member of Parliament, Mr. Frank Baylis, owned a company that got a contract to supply the government with ventilators during the COVID pandemic. Rumour has it that the ventilators were never used. The ventilators were not approved by Health Canada either, yet the government bought 237 million dollars' worth of them, and they appear to have never been useful in Canada. This is the level of corruption we are dealing with, so I again take my hat off to the member for South Shore—St. Margarets for finding out this newest scandal.

I should also mention the ArriveCAN app scandal, where an app that should have cost no more than \$200,000 ended up costing the government \$60 million. As I pointed out at the beginning of my speech, the government, the Prime Minister and cabinet are responsible for the debit card of the nation, and they appear to have written the PIN on the back of it and handed it out wherever they went. Then when the scandals ensued, they said they did not know about them or that well-meaning Canadians abused the Canadian debit card.

This goes right back to the very beginning, though, to the level of Liberal scandal we saw already right after 2015. When the Prime Minister became the Prime Minister, we can recall his notorious Aga Khan trip, for which the Prime Minister was found in violation of the ethics code and was fined. We have never-ending layer upon layer of Liberal scandals.

The one on SDTC is most closely related to the Winnipeg lab scandal. This scandal is very hard to explain to people because we do not know much about it, although we know there is something there.

• (1730)

What happened is that members of Parliament voted and demanded that the government release documents related to suspicious activities: the arrest of individuals who worked at the lab, a number of trips made back and forth between that lab and China, and Chinese nationals who had access to the virology lab in Winnipeg. We knew that something seemed fishy there, so the House of Commons demanded the documents to get to the bottom of what was going on with that.

An hon. member: Did we get the documents?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, we did not get the documents. In fact, the Prime Minister sued the Speaker of this place. It was unprecedented in Canadian history for the Prime Minister to sue the Speaker of the House of Commons to prevent those documents from being released. Then, as that carried on, the Prime Minister called an election to prevent the documents from becoming open.

Now we are in a similar situation. The House of Commons has demanded documents to be handed over to the RCMP. We are not

asking for the documents for ourselves. We are saying to hand these documents over to the RCMP.

This is much the same as a person discovering that an employee of their business is embezzling. When the accounting department starts to put the pieces together, it might say, "We have a body of evidence that we think so and so is embezzling." They might then confront the individual, but they would also most likely call the police. The first thing they would do is call the police and say they suspect that a crime has taken place, and they would hand over all of the documentation to prove the case. Then we would expect the RCMP or the police of jurisdiction to do its own investigation, which is an important part of police individuality. They do not just take accusations on their face; they do their own investigations. What we are saying here is that something stinks to high heaven. We can see what is going on. We can see how folks have abused the national debit card when they were entrusted with the PIN, and we are saying this is illegal; this is a crime.

The Liberals have pointed out that there have been Ethics Commissioner and Commissioner of Lobbying reports on this and that the Auditor General has had a report, which is great, but all of those people are not judging the criminal element of this particular thing. We suspect there was a crime, and we want the RCMP to do an investigation and to have the documents that it needs, which we are entitled to ask for. We feel that the RCMP should have those documents in order to build the case we want it to build. This is entirely within the purview of Canadian Parliament. It is one of the privileges of members of Parliament to ask for these documents.

However, it begs the question: Much as in the case of the Winnipeg lab, what are the Liberals hiding? We still do not know what they were hiding in the Winnipeg lab case, but what are they hiding in this case?

Quite honestly, the Liberals have been all over the place. At first they said it was an arm's-length organization and they did know anything about it. Then they said we were violating people's charter rights. Now they are saying this is grinding the House to a halt. We agree that this is grinding the House to a halt, but the privileges of members of Parliament are an important thing to debate. An easy solution for the impasse we see today would be for the government to release the documents so we can hand them off to the RCMP.

What is the crux of the matter? A board of directors was responsible for \$1 billion of grant money being handed out, and these board members appeared to have made proposals to the board they were associated with for companies to get grant money. The Auditor General said that in 10 of these cases, there were no grounds whatsoever for these companies to get money, and in 180 other cases, the Auditor General said there was a conflict of interest in the companies getting the money.

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● (1735)

We have studied the minutes of these meetings, and what appears to have happened is that folks affiliated with particular companies would make a pitch that the company they were affiliated with should get some money from this fund. Then, in most cases, they would recuse themselves from the decision. They would leave the room; the decision would be made, “Yes, we should give the company some money”; and then they would come back. Then it would be the next person's turn, and they would propose that their company should get some money, and they would say, “Due to a conflict of interest, I will not vote on it.”

The point of putting a board in place is to ensure accountability and oversight. Members of that board were colluding among themselves to hand money to each other, and the quid pro quo was, “we will vote for your company to get money with the understanding that you will vote for our company to get money.” That is what happened. We see over \$330 million, a lot of taxpayer money, voted on by a board to be given to its members' own companies, when boards are generally there to provide oversight.

To go back to the beginning, this board seems to have been appointed to reward loyalty to the Liberal Party. If that is not enough of a connection to the Liberal Party, I do not know what is. There is also ministerial oversight: The deputy minister was in those meetings ensuring that things were going along as the minister would like them to and were also being reported back to the minister. This goes right back to the Liberal corruption we have seen over and over again with all of the other scandals along the way.

Another element to this scandal has not been highlighted as maybe it should have been. Several of the folks on the board not only secured funds for organizations they were affiliated with, but in many cases they also owned shares in those companies. We have one case of a company that one of the board members was affiliated with that saw a dramatic growth in its stock price because it had secured funds from the SDTC board. He admitted in committee there had been a thousand-fold increase in value for himself. Not only did he secure taxpayer funds for a company he was affiliated with; he personally became extremely wealthy from it because he owned stock in that particular company.

The conflicts of interest, the corruption and the abuse of the taxpayer debit card know no limits with the Liberals. When we see the amount of waste and the lack of concern around financial controls, it is no wonder that this country is suffering an inflation crisis. We see that food, gas and housing prices are up dramatically, and we are calling for the government to axe the tax. When the government taxes the farmer who grows the food and taxes the truck driver who transports the food, Canadians cannot afford food.

We think it is time for a carbon tax election so Canadians can see hope on the horizon, a return to normalcy and a government that understands that the privileges of governing and controlling the country's debit card, and the PIN that comes with it, are important. We need to ensure that our finances are respected and that we are not allowing entities to enrich themselves off the taxpayer dollar with no benefit to the public good.

I look forward to the carbon tax election. I know it will be coming soon. All of my colleagues and I have heard from our con-

stituents over the last week, those who are struggling under the carbon tax, going to the food bank and things like that. They are calling for an election and they hope it can happen sooner rather than later. After the election I am certain we will axe the tax.

● (1740)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition Conservatives continually want to play the game, at a great cost to Canadians but to the benefit, I suspect, of the Conservative Party.

My question is related to a previous member standing in his place clearly calling into question the letter written by the RCMP commissioner. This is the far right of the Conservative Party coming out. Its members are talking about how the RCMP is discredited now, which is part of this ongoing game they are playing. This all goes to the leadership of the Conservative Party.

Can the member explain to Canadians why the leader of the Conservative Party feels no obligation to get a security clearance in order to find out what is happening in foreign affairs as opposed to discrediting the RCMP?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I know that after the carbon tax election, the leader of the Conservative Party will get his security clearance, as he will be the Prime Minister of the country. At that point, we will be able to look into many of these things that have gone on. I imagine the shredding has already begun. When the Conservatives are in power, we will bring accountability to the Department of Finance. We look forward to ensuring accountability, and rooting out corruption is something the Conservatives will take very seriously.

The Liberals love to decry the lack of trust in institutions in this country while they have caused that very destruction of the institutions by using them for their political ends. We have to look no further than the horrific tragedy in Nova Scotia, when the Prime Minister was pressuring the commissioner of the RCMP to release the models of firearms that were used, in order for him to get a political win. We have evidence that the Prime Minister is not above pressuring the RCMP, and I hope the Liberals have come to their senses on this, but I doubt it.

● (1745)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said the leader of the Conservative Party will get his security clearance when he becomes Prime Minister. There is foreign interference happening right now. His party's members may be implicated, but he refuses to get his security clearance now to protect the integrity of his party and to protect our democracy. Richard Fadden, the former director of CSIS, publicly said the Leader of the Opposition will not be gagged. Even if he was concerned about that, he could ask for just specific briefings on his party.

Why will the Leader of the Opposition not get his security clearance?

Privilege

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, the debate we are having today is about documents the government has failed to produce. We have called for the release of the names that the member is concerned about. I do not know why the NDP member continues to prop up, defend and use the same talking points as the Liberal government. I thought the supply and confidence agreement was over. It appears it is not.

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am still trying to understand how much \$400 million really is and what it represents. I think Canadians at home would also like something more relatable so they can put this into context.

What could that money actually buy? It can buy 80 million cheeseburger Happy Meals, which is about two for every Canadian; 161 million double-doubles, which is a week's worth for every adult Canadian; or, for the good people of Toronto—St. Paul's, 170,000 months of rent, or about five months for every renter in St. Paul's.

If the government used taxpayer money to give away the equivalent of 80 million cheeseburgers, how can we trust it with any of our funds?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Toronto—St. Paul's on his recent election. I know the people of Toronto—St. Paul's are well represented. He has hit the ground running and has been doing yeoman's work in this place.

The member's cheeseburger analogy is one I had not thought of, but I have used a Big Mac conversion as a way to see the value of money over time. We have seen the McDonald's menu items go up in price dramatically because of inflation. I also use the McDonald's analogy to see what its value is in relation to other countries. We have an official exchange rate, but it is always interesting to see the McDonald's menu around the world and how it compares from one country to another.

The member brought up McDonald's and how many cheeseburgers \$400 million would have bought, and I really appreciate that analogy.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

We have been hearing a lot from the NDP. I value the contributions from everybody in this House. One thing they have not addressed is that many of them served under Thomas Mulcair. Now, Tom Mulcair has said on many occasions that he absolutely would not do what the Liberals are asking of the member for Carleton, the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition. In fact, Mr. Mulcair would in no way do what the NDP members are right now asking the member for Carleton to do.

How do we regard someone from the NDP who is saying, "Don't take the bait; prosecute this government. Name them and let's get on with it"? We should not have people in our midst who are wittingly helping foreign states.

• (1750)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my colleague, who always has a way of summing these things up.

It is concerning to me that the NDP continuously seems to be propping up the Liberal Party, not only in terms of policy initiatives but particularly around this corruption issue. It is fascinating that the NDP continues to prop up the flailing government.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have held back from making comments for some time. After what I just heard, however, I have a question. South of the border, a presidential candidate has just aired an ad on social media featuring his appearance at a McDonald's restaurant. Here, the Conservatives are talking about cheeseburgers and the same restaurant chain.

Do we have to take our lead from what happens south of the border? The Conservatives have reached a point where they are trying to copy what is going on in a US election campaign. All of this is almost surreal. I think a more serious approach would be appropriate.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I just had to check the Google machine to see which presidential candidate was at McDonald's. I was not aware of that, so I guess I am pleasantly surprised. I am happy to continue to use McDonald's references in the House of Commons.

I look forward to some more spirited debate with the hon. member.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every time I get a chance to speak in the House, I never want to forget the fact that all of us who are here were elected because of the people in our ridings, so I never want to take that for granted. For the opportunity I have to serve them to the best of my ability, I just want to say thanks again to the residents of Niagara West.

My thought process really is on what is going on with the Liberal Party and whether its members are competent managers. We are talking about a question of privilege right now, but my biggest concern in the next election is who is the most competent to run this country. I can assure the House that the least competent government in the history of this country is the present Liberal government under its current leader, who loves his photo-ops and loves making promises he has no intention of delivering on whatsoever. The two billion trees was a great one. How many trees have we actually planted? We cannot get the information because the Liberals are not very transparent. Another promise, in 2015, was to be the most transparent government. We missed that one pretty quickly; it fell off the bandwagon almost right away.

When I listen to what the Liberals are talking about, one of the challenges is that I do not believe a word that is coming out of their mouths. They are not competent. They are not great managers. At the end of the day, they will say anything to get elected, and for the most part they have a lack of follow-through and are not prepared to actually do the hard work or get things done.

I just want to work through a couple things as we talk about that, and I heard my colleague from Provencher talk about a few things that I was going to add. The member for Kingston and the Islands said we had people in the basement writing speeches. I can assure him that is not the case, and they are certainly not PMO talking points. I will give him that as well, but there are so many scandals that when the member for Provencher started talking about them, I thought, "Oh my goodness; I forgot about all those scandals." There are just so many to remember.

I wrote down a number of them that I want to talk about. We are talking about transparency. We are talking about trying to get information. When we request information, it comes back redacted. For those people who may not have been listening to the debate, "redacted" means that big black sharpie or magic marker that goes over all the answers and gives probably less information than what we were trying to get.

I look at what has gone on, and it would seem this is not the first time the government has not offered up a number of things. The member for Provencher talked about the Winnipeg labs. That is something that troubles me greatly when I look at what went on there. We asked for documentation, and we absolutely got stonewalled to the point where we actually brought someone to the bar, but not a member of Parliament. That is something that had not been done in over a century, and they still refused to give us the information.

Then we found out that the scientists were working for the Communist Party of China. Give me a break, in terms of being able to vet people. I am sure that it has never happened before. The current government is always good at vetting people. I feel as if, at the end of the day, not only were they not vetted but they were also actually taking the information out of the lab and sending it back to China. They were probably sending it via Canada Post, as a matter of fact, trying to make sure it got there. This is unbelievable.

I hear all the time about the fact that we are looking at things that are going on and that we are the party of big business. I do remember, from not so long ago, the \$12 million the government gave to Loblaw for freezers. Not long after, Loblaw got charged in a half-a-billion-dollar price-fixing case over bread.

• (1755)

Not only did a company like Loblaw not need the money, because it is doing very well, but after the government gave it money, this large, Canadian corporation agreed to pay a fine of \$500 million. Think about that. How much bread was it price-fixing if it was prepared to pay a fine like that?

Someone mentioned Jasper, and I think we do need to raise Jasper as an issue. It is absolutely tragic. As more information comes out as to what was going on there and the fact that the government neglected any type of advice from experts, or neglected anything, it is absolutely devastating. I feel for the people of Jasper. Many times it had been said that we needed to do something around fire management and what was going on with all the dry brush. We also read stories about how volunteer firefighters showed up and were turned away.

Privilege

I wonder to myself whether the government is one we actually want to trust as it continues to lead. Is nine years not enough for the Liberals, in terms of moving forward?

Frank Baylis was also mentioned. I cannot help but re-emphasize that one. There were \$237 million in contracts he got two months after he left office. Talk about hitting the payday. At the end of the day, I do not know whether one could have worked here for 10 or 20 years and be able to get the kind of contract to the tune of what he got. We know what happened with all the ventilators; they were scrapped and never used.

We are talking about some of the inside connections, and that is what this is about. We are talking about almost \$400 million in contracts from SDTC, Sustainable Development Technology Canada. We are talking about that and about the insiders who got money.

We see this happening over and over again, and that is the challenge that I see. The government loves taking care of itself and its buddies, and quite frankly I am not sure whether we can trust it. Let us go back to some of the promises it has made in terms of what it was prepared to do. The two billion trees was a good one, but I also love the fact that it wants to build almost four million homes, in about the same period of time.

If we look at the math, we realize that we probably need to build almost half a million homes a year. Currently we are building fewer than 250,000. It is pretty easy to make commitments just so people will be happy to hear what someone has to say, when they actually have no idea how they are going to fulfill the contracts, how they are actually going to get the houses built, and how they are actually going to get some of the obligations met. That is one of the things that are absolutely troubling.

Small businesses got crushed during Covid. They got absolutely destroyed. The government also promised it would be looking at a carbon tax rebate. I have not talked to one owner of a small business yet that has received a carbon tax rebate, and I would certainly love to hear from the government about when that is going to be, because a number of businesses have gone under and have struggled in such a way that the carbon tax rebate is probably not even going to help them at this point. However, it would be something that would be nice if we could move forward on it.

I also want to look at some of the other things we have been talking about in the House. I find it interesting that the committee continues to look at which Randy got government contracts. Why are we asking the government all these questions and we continue to get zero response whatsoever in terms of being able to find out the kind of information we want? The Liberals give us a hard time, saying we should not be asking for all that information because they are not prepared to give it up at this point in time.

Privilege

It has been said lots, and I will only touch on it, but one of the reasons we are here is the conflicts of interest when it came to the green slush fund. We have talked about over 186 conflicts. That is obviously very concerning. I am always amazed, when we start going through all these things, that there are actually so many different challenges, misappropriating of funds, things that could have been done better or things that could have been more efficient, that it goes back to my original premise: The government is incompetent. The government does not have the ability to get things done in a timely and efficient way.

• (1800)

I think of the ArriveCAN app that cost just under \$60 million and could have been done for a little over \$80,000. I think of the testimony we have heard. Documentation from the Auditor General includes government officials' lying in an attempt to silence whistle-blowers. In this culture of openness and transparency, government is suppressing whistle-blowers and trying to suspend people without pay for telling the truth at committee. Consultants were making millions and millions of dollars while not adding any value to work, and while there were inappropriate relationships and friendships between government officials in charge of awarding multi-million-dollar contracts and the people receiving some of those contracts.

Part of being a government is being accountable for what it does, and not only being accountable but also making sure taxpayers receive value for the money. One of the challenges people tell me about all the time is that they are struggling right now with the cost of living, with the carbon tax and with the fact that everything costs more. It costs more to heat their homes, to buy food, to pay rent and to pay for a number of other things.

When Canadians see that their money is not being spent appropriately by the government, in a way that makes some sense, is transparent and makes sure that people get value for money, they ask why we are not taking better care of their taxpayer dollars. Those are the things Conservatives continue to question and should be allowed to question. It was mentioned earlier that it is the opposition's job to question what is going on in government and to hold it to account.

We have been talking about SDTC and a number of other things, but I think we almost forgot about all the consulting contracts that went to McKinsey. Do members remember that? It received over \$209 million in contracts, and 90% of the contracts the Liberal government awarded to McKinsey were given without proper guidelines. At the end of the day, money was being handed out without following any type of process.

In many cases it was a little unclear what the purpose of the contracts was; the government did not know what they were for or the outcome that was supposed to be achieved. In one case, the Canada Border Services Agency saw that McKinsey did not qualify for contracts, so it revised the statement of work so it could qualify. Let us think about that for a second: The CBSA put out a contract for work that was not defined, so it reworked the contract so McKinsey could get the work.

If we look at the sole-source contracts, we see that there was never any type of justification for them. Over 70% of all contracts

awarded to McKinsey were non-competitive, and in 13 out of 17 contracts given to McKinsey, security clearances should have been necessary but the Liberal government allowed McKinsey to operate without them. It is not a surprise that the Prime Minister gave McKinsey hundreds of millions of dollars, because at that time, McKinsey was led by Dominic Barton, a close friend of the Prime Minister and the finance minister. We talk about Liberal-connected friends getting contracts and money as a result of that.

We know that Dominic Barton was a key figure in the Liberals' advisory council on economic growth and on their Indo-Pacific advisory committee. It was Barton's idea to create the failed scandal-plagued Canada Infrastructure Bank, and it was Barton and McKinsey who had to pay nearly \$600 million in damages in the opioid crisis.

Looking at a number of these things, we realize that when it comes to competence or the ability to get things done, there needs to be accountability. That is why we, members of the opposition, are asking questions. That is why we are demanding that we get a chance to see the documents unredacted and that they can move on to the appropriate authorities.

The appropriate authorities will do what they need to do. We are not indicating what should happen. We are saying that in order for the RCMP to do its work, it needs to see the documents. We asked for these things and did not receive anything at all. That is why we are here debating. This could all be over right away; if the Liberals would provide the documentation, we would move on to something else.

• (1805)

That is obviously an issue. Part of the challenge that we have had is we realized that, through the contracting system, the RCMP revealed earlier this year that it had charged a scamster who received \$250,000 through the Prime Minister's broken contracting system. The Liberal-NDP coalition blocked questions to the officials responsible for the government.

We saw the RCMP previously testify that it had multiple investigations of federal contracting, in addition to its active investigation in the Prime Minister's \$60-million arrivescam app, which was supposed to cost the taxpayers \$80,000.

We go over a number of these things, and we realize, at the end of the day, that the people who are doing well are Liberal insiders and those who are connected. We look at what happened with our trade minister, dealing with public relations, pomp and circumstance, conflict of interest and contracts awarded for communication services. In 2019-20, the Ethics Commissioner said there was no excuse for contracting with a friend's company. The commissioner went on to say that the minister twice failed to recognize the potential conflict of interest involving a friend, an oversight of her obligations under the Conflict of Interest Act.

This sounds familiar because, as I just mentioned, of the terms of the contracts with the two Randys that we are trying to get to the bottom of and how some of these contracts were awarded during COVID.

Then, of course, as has been raised before and it does not hurt to mention it again, there is the whole issue of the Prime Minister's ethics convictions, dealing with the Aga Khan and the Paradise Island vacation. He was charged with an ethics violation after spending time on the Bahamas island. The investigators believed that there was reasonable grounds to think fraud may have been committed.

Ultimately, the RCMP did not lay charges because of the lack of clarity in the federal rules that applied to accepting gifts. However, the Ethics Commissioner found that the Prime Minister was guilty of breaking laws that violated section 5, 11, 12 and 21 of the Conflict of Interest Act.

The Ethics Commissioner questioned the Prime Minister's friendship with the Aga Khan. The Prime Minister used the words "close family friend" to refer to the Aga Khan, but the Ethics Commissioner found that this was not the case. The Prime Minister took the trip to Paradise Island and was brought in on a private helicopter. The Prime Minister thinks he is above the law. Canadians are well aware of that.

What Canadians are finding right now is that they believe there is so much hypocrisy that their tax dollars are not being taken care of in a responsible way.

We have SNC-Lavalin, which was mentioned here. The Ethics Commissioner found that the Prime Minister violated section 9 of the Conflict of Interest Act by attempting to influence then-attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould to intervene in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, a Quebec-based engineering firm.

The ruling stated that the Prime Minister improperly used his position of authority to attempt to further the private interests of SNC-Lavalin by seeking to pressure Wilson-Raybould to offer a deferred prosecution agreement, which would have allowed the company to avoid a criminal charge and corruption charges. The Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking Canada's ethics laws through the efforts to protect a corrupt, politically connected company by firing his first indigenous attorney general, who would not bend to the Prime Minister's orchestrated campaign of political pressure.

The former ethics commissioner's report indicated that witnesses said they had relevant evidence to offer but were constrained by the limitations put in place by the Liberal Prime Minister. The exact same tactics blocked the RCMP from probing the possibility of criminal charges related to the Prime Minister's orchestrated and systematic campaign to pressure then-attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould to overrule the independent Public Prosecution Service and offer SNC-Lavalin a deferred prosecution agreement.

Last year, the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition censored the RCMP by shutting down the commissioner's testimony in committee. They did whatever it took to protect the Prime Minister from potential criminal charges. Common-sense Conservatives would continue to hold the Liberal-NDP government and its Bloc allies accountable. Canadians certainly deserve transparency and the right to know.

Privilege

I know I only have a minute left, but I need more time if I am going to go through all the scandals. We talked about the WE Charity. These things happened early on, but I think what people fail to understand is that this creates distrust when it comes constituents, taxpayers and voters.

• (1810)

The job of the official opposition is to hold the government to account. That is what we are attempting to do as we move forward with this question of privilege, and we are trying to make sure that the proper documents go to the people who need to have a look at them. We have a responsibility as members of Parliament to do the best job that we can for our constituents and we need to be responsible for taxpayer dollars. That is what this opposition is going to continue to do to the government. We will continue to hold it accountable on issues that are matters of the public purse and affect our constituents. We will continue to pressure the government and its supporters for answers to all these questions.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I and everybody in this House came to this place to get work done on behalf of our constituents. My constituents want me to come up here and talk about things like housing, health care, dental care and other things that they really care about. If I can be perfectly transparent, the number of calls I get in my constituency office with respect to this subject is minuscule.

I appreciate that the role of the opposition is to throw as many blocks as it can, but we are here to get work done on behalf of Canadians. There is a quote that I would like to read, from the Conservative MP for Brantford—Brant, who is the justice critic. He said, "You know what happens if you can't get a document? You go to the court and you ask for search warrants or production orders."

I wonder if the member opposite could comment on that.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. We do come here to debate what is going on in the country, the laws of the land and how we can make things better for our constituents. That is why we need to continue to dig.

There is an affordability crisis. There is a cost of living crisis. People are having a hard time paying their rent. People are having a hard time basically surviving. We see the proliferation of tent cities showing up. There are addiction issues. There are mental health issues. When constituents see a misuse of public funds, when constituents see friends of the government of the day, in this case the Liberal Party, getting rich because of the misappropriation of funds, maybe looking at favouring certain companies that the government members are close to, that is when we need to come here and do our job and hold the government to account.

Privilege

• (1815)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague did a great job outlining the tremendous record of the Liberal Party's failures to report to this place or to provide good documentation as many Canadians need to see transparency for the SDTC file. That is why New Democrats support this motion.

However, this is the troubling part. We often hear the Conservatives speak to financial accountability and then leave out completely the history of the Conservative Party's deep involvement in scandals. I can even list some of the scandals the member missed in his review: the Airbus scandal where we saw kickbacks to Conservative ministers; the in-and-out scandal where the Conservatives got away with election fraud. Mike Duffy literally took a \$90,000 bag of cash right from the Prime Minister's Office.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, now they are upset.

How can the Conservatives square the circle of the fact that they are involved?

The Speaker: Order. I am certain all members would like to hear the answer.

The hon. member for Niagara West.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach for going back 20 or 30 years trying to find a scandal. I appreciate that.

At the end of the day, our job here is to partly make sure that our constituents are better off and they have more money. That is something that, under the Stephen Harper government, we did. More people had more money in their pockets. I was proud to be a part of that government where more people had more money in their pockets.

Quite frankly, over the last number of years, a lot of what has happened in terms of the cost of goods and services is driven by the carbon tax that has made everything more expensive. When we get back in power, we will make sure that we take care of that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think we have a bigger problem than one of a partisan label.

I appreciate my hon. colleague raising the issue of using outside contractors as opposed to people within our civil service; so, McKinsey, Deloitte, all of them. We saw a real increase in contracting out that started around 2005 with the idea of getting rid of individual service providers within each department and just having a 1-800 Service Canada number. We saw the same thing happen with the decision to outsource payroll and got IBM to supposedly save us a lot of money, but it cost us over \$5 billion. I think we need to have accountability at multiple levels from when we started deciding we were better off contracting out. I would ask my hon. colleague if his party would want to take another look at some of the mistakes of the past.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have been talking about here for some time is looking at the amount of money that has been spent on consultants. However, we have also seen the

civil service increase by almost 40%. Part of what we need to do is make sure that the civil service has the ability and expertise to get some of those things done. If we are increasing the amount of money for the civil service and then still needing outside contractors, we should be looking at what we have, doing an analysis of that and trying to get the best bang for taxpayers' dollars. That is what we are required to do as officials and those who are elected to serve our constituents.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise here, and I appreciated my colleague's comments.

I like to be collaborative, and we are obviously at a bit of a stalemate. I have an idea to propose that I want my hon. colleague's thoughts on: Either the documents get produced or maybe the government should just get back the \$400 million. I would support either one of those things happening, and then maybe we could move on. Would my hon. colleague like to comment on that suggestion?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I think that there is one other option. Maybe we can have an election and we can determine how we feel the carbon tax has played out with individuals, and whether the people feel that their dollars have been spent wisely. I think maybe I will just propose a third option to my colleague for Simcoe North that we look at having an election and letting the people decide what we should do as we move forward.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because a Conservative member says something in the House does not necessarily mean that it is factually accurate, and I will give a tangible example.

Many Conservatives stand in their place and talk about a Liberal-leaning board. The member knows, and if he does not then he should know, that the chair of the board was an adviser to Stephen Harper, Brian Mulroney and Jim Flaherty, and contributed thousands of dollars to the Conservative Party. Yes, we did appoint her to the board, and there were tangible actions taken. However, all that aside, every Conservative who stands up to talk about the issue tries to give the false impression that this is some corrupt Liberal when they know full well that is not the case. Can the member explain why it is that Conservatives tend to want to exaggerate what might not necessarily be the reality?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I think that a lot of these problems can be solved if we just release the documents, unredacted, so that we can actually see what was involved, where the money went and what the reasons were.

The member raises a good point. We all want to make sure that we are getting value for money. I think one way to solve that problem once and for all would be to bring those documents here before the House of Commons and make sure that we can get them off to the RCMP so that it can do its work. Once we do that, then we will make sure that it does not happen again as we move forward.

Privilege

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a fact: It is a \$40-billion deficit. If we take 1% of that, that is still \$400 million.

Is this a case of the government being unable to handle large numbers like \$40 billion, let alone another \$400 million?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I think that is always a challenge when we are talking to the public. These are extremely large numbers at the end of the day, and I would venture to say that maybe people understand \$50,000 or \$60,000, but \$400 million is an awful lot of money.

Yes, regardless of the amount of money, the government has a problem with it.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a matter of utmost importance: transparency and accountability.

Those are two words that the NDP-Liberal government's actions have proven it knows very little about, or it simply does not care.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines transparency as “A situation in which business and financial activities are done in an open way without secrets, so that people can trust that they are fair and honest.” It defines accountability as “A situation in which someone is responsible for things that happen and can give a satisfactory reason for them.”

In 2015, the Liberals ran on a platform of transparency and accountability. Where is it? After nine years, Canadians are still waiting for it, proving that the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost. Crime and corruption, along with scandals and controversies, have plagued the government from the very beginning.

We have had scandals like the SNC-Lavalin affair, the Aga Khan vacation, the India trip with Jaspal Atwal, the Jamaica vacation, the WE scandal, the blackface controversy, the Tofino controversy, cash-for-access fundraisers, the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, the handling of the Afghanistan crisis, “elbowgate”, Governor General Julie Payette's resignation, Queen Elizabeth's funeral, the Chinese election interference allegations, the use of the Emergencies Act, and now the corruption of the green slush fund.

When will these scandals, controversies and corruptions end? They have deeply tarnished our democracy and damaged our reputation on the global stage.

Only common-sense Conservatives, led by our leader, will continue to push for accountability, end the corruption and get answers for Canadians. Canadians have whiplash, and the NDP-Liberal government has been scandal after scandal, with a side of controversy and a splash of crime.

It feels like just yesterday we were debating the ArriveCAN debacle, and before Canadians had the time to process that scam, they were hit with the news of a billion-dollar green slush fund that failed to reduce emissions or support green technology. Instead, those funds went into the coffers of Liberal insiders. To add insult to injury, a government official, who was handpicked by the Prime Minister, confirmed that no action was taken after gross mismanagement and conflicts of interest were uncovered.

For Canadians who are not familiar with this topic, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, was established by the Government of Canada in 2001. It is a federal initiative aimed at funding and supporting the development and demonstration of clean technology.

• (1825)

It has two goals: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by investing in innovative technologies and to support projects that contribute to environmental sustainability and economic growth. This initiative is meant to help Canadian businesses bring their clean technology to market, thereby boosting the economy and creating jobs. Sustainable Development Technology Canada provides grants and funding to companies working on projects that align with these goals, aiming to make a significant impact on Canada's environmental and economic landscape.

However, this fund comes under scrutiny, and for good reason. The Liberal green slush fund has been accused of giving grants to start-ups with ties to the senior management of Sustainable Development Technology Canada. The Auditor General found that Liberal appointees gave, and members should hold on to their pants now, \$400 million to their own companies.

The Auditor General reviewed 226 projects and concluded that of those 226 projects, 186 were conflicted. If we do the math, that is 82%.

Leah Lawrence, the CEO of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, and the chair, Annette Verschuren, have both resigned following allegations that the money in the fund was used improperly.

The Liberals appointed a chair who was a friend of the Prime Minister and was found to have broken ethical—

• (1830)

The Speaker: The hon. member will have approximately 13 and a half minutes left on the clock when she resumes her debate on this question of privilege.

[*Translation*]

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.

S. O. 52

EMERGENCY DEBATE

[Translation]

RCMP ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the RCMP allegations concerning foreign interference from the Government of India.

[English]

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Vancouver South.

Today I rise to participate in this emergency debate to discuss the urgent issue of foreign interference in the lives of Canadians by the Government of India.

I am a proud Canadian with Indian ancestry. My parents immigrated as teenagers to the United Kingdom and came to Canada in 1972. I was born in Calgary, and Canada exceeded their expectations in every way. They had the opportunity to grow their family, find financial success and have the freedom to participate in the political process.

Indians are proud of their democracy, and the Indian diaspora has had a profound impact on global affairs and business. Over the last 75 years, India has been a leading example of strong democratic institutions, civil society and economic opportunity in the developing world. India has uplifted millions of its impoverished citizens while being an important bridge in global relations.

However, as governments change in democratic societies, so do their policy objectives. Today India is stronger economically and more aggressive and muscular in its strategic foreign policy objectives. This does not justify abandoning its values of upholding justice and the rule of law.

As Canadian members of Parliament, it is our duty to protect the safety and sovereignty of Canadians. Canada is guided by the rule of law, and we adhere to the Vienna Convention at all times. We expect India to uphold these same standards.

When our law enforcement and intelligence services began pursuing credible allegations that agents of the Government of India were directly involved in the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, on Canadian soil, we responded quickly. Our government conveyed its concerns to the Government of India and urged them to collaborate with us in shedding light on this critical issue.

Through the national task force and other investigative efforts, the RCMP has gathered evidence that reveals four serious concerns: Violent extremists are impacting both countries; there are links tying agents of the Government of India to homicides in Canada; organized crime is being used to create the perception of unsafe environments in targeting the South Asian community in Canada; and there is interference in our democratic processes.

These are not mere allegations, but serious findings from our national law enforcement that require immediate attention.

Investigations have uncovered that Indian diplomats and consular officials based in Canada have leveraged their official position to engage in clandestine activities, gathering information for the Government of India either directly or through their agents and other individuals who acted voluntarily or under coercion.

Evidence has also shown that a wide range of entities in Canada and abroad have been utilized by agents of the Government of India to collect information. Some of these individuals and businesses were coerced and threatened into co-operating with the Government of India, and the information collected was then used to target members of the South Asian community.

• (1835)

Recently, one of my constituents was extorted and his home was shot at. He shared with me that every day he woke up scared for the safety of his wife and children. He stayed away from his home and loved ones in hopes of keeping them safe. This is not the life he envisioned when he immigrated to this great country. Fortunately, thanks to the diligent work of the Calgary Police Service, the perpetrators were apprehended, but as we have seen, this is not always the outcome.

As a member of the Sikh faith, I know there have been allegations of Indian government interference since the Golden Temple attack in 1984 and accusations by the Indian government against the Sikh community since the Air India bombing in 1985. In the anti-Sikh riots, Indian government officials were complicit in the killing of thousands of Sikhs during that time. Mothers were raped in front of their children. Some were cut into pieces and burned alive by violent mobs. In many cases, the bodies were never recovered. However, 40 years later, families are still seeking justice, and the pain and trauma continue to resonate with the community today.

All Canadians, regardless of their faith or background, are guided by our legal framework. We have the opportunity to express ourselves. The Government of India may not like what many Canadians have to say, but just like India, we are a country governed by laws. Our police and intelligence agencies speaking publicly during an ongoing investigation highlights how serious this matter is.

The police have warned at least 12 Canadians of a pending threat. A foreign government is being accused of being complicit in the murder of three others. A clear, dangerous and unprecedented red line has been crossed. As Michael Duheme, the commissioner of the RCMP, has stated, an “extraordinary situation is compelling us to speak about what we have discovered in our multiple ongoing investigations into the involvement of agents of the Government of India in serious criminal activity in Canada.”

As shown by the RCMP, this is an extremely serious issue. An emergency debate is imperative so that we can come together to find solutions and address the concerns of those who feel targeted or unsafe.

Based on the information provided to Global Affairs Canada by the RCMP, we formally requested that India waive diplomatic immunity for six individuals based in Canada and co-operate in the investigation. This request was made so that these individuals could be questioned regarding the ongoing RCMP investigation into a number of violent incidents targeting members of the South Asian community here in Canada. Regrettably, India did not agree, and given the ongoing public safety concerns for Canadians, Canada issued notices of expulsion to six diplomats and consular officials. Following those notices, India also announced it would withdraw its officials.

To be clear, we are not seeking a diplomatic confrontation with India. Still, we will not sit quietly when agents of any country are linked to efforts to threaten, harass and even kill Canadians, full stop.

I urge my colleagues to view this not just as a national security issue or as a partisan issue, but as a matter of parliamentary responsibility. Parliament must address threats to national sovereignty with the seriousness they demand. It is our duty to ensure that all Canadians feel safe from foreign influence and intimidation.

Last September, when the Prime Minister stood in the House of Commons to speak about the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Conservatives sidestepped the issue, claiming there was no evidence. Well, now we have the evidence. I would encourage the leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton, to obtain a top secret clearance so he can be provided with the appropriate classified information to make informed decisions in reference to any allegations against parliamentarians in his party, just as all other parties have done.

We must stand united across party lines to protect Canada's national interests and the well-being of our citizens. The safety and security of our citizens, regardless of their background or beliefs, must remain our top priority, and we will not tolerate any form of intimidation, harassment or harmful targeting of communities or individuals in Canada. All Canadians deserve to live free from fear, and we must take decisive steps to ensure that.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here is what is likely to happen tonight. The Conservatives are going to say that foreign interference is all the Liberals' fault. In response, the Liberals will say that it is all the Conservatives' fault.

My colleague just spoke about government accountability. On November 18, 2020, the House passed a motion calling on the government to create a foreign agent registry, and that did not happen until 2024. Can my colleague explain how his government acted responsibly after that motion was passed and why it waited four years to take action?

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[*English*]

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean for the work he does at the foreign affairs committee.

I know that colleagues from across Parliament take these concerns seriously. That is why all of us have supported initiatives to protect Canadians. That is why we saw the Prime Minister stand up in the House of Commons, which is unprecedented, to show how serious the government is. It is also why the RCMP, last week, held a press conference to inform Canadians on the need for further self-care and that it is monitoring the situation appropriately.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South, tried to introduce in the House a motion to create a standing committee on Canada-India relations, yet the unanimous consent that was required was denied by the Liberal Party. I am a bit confused given my Liberal colleague's speech today.

My question is pretty clear. We have serious concerns with the government's constant contradictions. If it is so concerned with India's foreign interference, why did it say no to the motion by the member for Burnaby South?

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I did not deny any request. I support the study that was recommended at the SECU committee. I participated last Friday in the Standing Order 106(4) request that was brought forward. I also support the Hogue commission set up by the Government of Canada to look into foreign interference and will continue to do so.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Calgary Skyview put his finger on a really significant problem. I very much welcome the study undertaken by the public safety and national security standing committee, but the Hogue inquiry, by its terms of reference, is solely focused on foreign interference in our democratic processes within, for instance, elections. We know, as the member for Calgary Skyview just stated, that tonight's emergency debate was prompted by RCMP work, at a multidisciplinary level, that has revealed a criminal network within Canada that threatens people and has actually killed people, which is not within the scope of Madam Justice Hogue's inquiry. Is the Liberal Party or the government prepared to expand the mandate of that inquiry?

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I support the study at the SECU committee, and I look forward to having that conversation there with committee members.

I think we need to look at foreign influence in the Conservative Party's previous leadership races. Serious allegations have arisen. As we work together at committee, whether it is SECU or another committee, we can go into a further dialogue and understanding of the issues that are brought forward today.

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• (1845)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP clearly mentioned that it has obtained evidence linking agents of the Indian government to homicides and other acts of violence in Canada, including extortion. Can the member elaborate on our measures to address, stop and prevent any act of violence against Canadians by foreign agents so that Canadians can feel safe in their home country?

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Brampton South brings forward a very important question.

For the RCMP to make a statement to Canadians acknowledges that there are serious threats. I am concerned about the threats that were brought forward, but I am happy to see the RCMP has stepped forward to work with police agencies across Canada to deal with these threats immediately.

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, we are moving into a world where it is becoming easier for foreign countries to suppress freedom beyond their own borders and extend repressive policies on the international stage, using social media and online censorship and, sadly, through transnational intimidation and murder. The tools and playbook that these countries are using are evolving, and how we deal with them must evolve as well.

I appreciate the opportunity today to speak to the very serious findings with respect to the involvement of agents of the Government of India in serious criminal activity on Canadian soil, disclosed by the RCMP last week.

The RCMP and national security officials made several attempts to work with the Government of India and Indian law enforcement counterparts on this matter, with the goal of putting an end to these criminal activities. They were repeatedly rebuffed in their attempts, including earlier this month, when the deputy commissioner, Mark Flynn; the national security and intelligence adviser, Nathalie Drouin; and the deputy minister of foreign affairs, David Morrison, met with officials from the Government of India. As such, the RCMP was compelled to move forward with the disclosure of the evidence it had gathered, which it did on October 14. I agree wholeheartedly with the Prime Minister, who said on October 14, "The government of India made a fundamental error in thinking that they could engage in supporting criminal activity against Canadians here on Canadian soil."

Canadians will not accept this happening here, because Canada offers a promise: to live in a democracy where fundamental rights are a guarantee and where freedom, rules-based order and safety are paramount. We share the common values that we are stronger when we learn from each other and when we peacefully share different ideas, even when we challenge each other's perspectives. That is why so many people call Canada home. That is why my family chose to come here. It is clear that for the Government of India, freedom is subjective, the rules-based order is only an uncomfortable theory and safety is clearly in question.

The RCMP's investigation found that the Indian government and its agents have a vested interest in defiling the very institutions and

freedoms that make Canada Canada, undermining our democracy, corralling our freedom and harming our citizens. Additionally, the RCMP and our security agencies will not tolerate acts of violence against Canadians for exercising their right to free speech, which is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We will not tolerate this, and no one in the House should tolerate this. I would like to thank the RCMP and our security agencies for their thorough work in protecting Canadians.

It has been a difficult few months for Sikh Canadians. Our community has been seized by intimidation, extortion, coercion and other serious offences. They can rest assured that Canadians from outside this community are now paying attention. There is no justification for perpetrating violence against Canadians in Canada. This is not a partisan issue. This is not subjective. It is not fodder for two-bit slogans and diversion tactics. This is about freedom and the lives of Canadians that are at stake. The rule of law is under threat here.

Canadians rightly expect party leaders to have their security clearance, and this includes the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, to know and understand the threats, foreign and domestic, even within their own party. A leader who does not stand up for all Canadians does not deserve to hold the highest office, and it is clear that the Conservative Party does not stand up for all Canadians. It was clear last week, when the Conservative leader did not release an official statement on his channels following the RCMP's revelations. A lack of a response only emboldens foreign governments to perpetuate disinformation and interference.

• (1850)

Every Canadian has the freedom to live their life in Canada without the fear of violence or coercion from a foreign entity. That does not come with an asterisk. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that Canada's principles are safeguarded, for dissent does not give leave to sanction murder in any civilized society. To attempt and actively pursue means of coercion, violence and extortion is the antithesis of a free, sovereign and civilized democracy.

I am proud that the majority of Canadians across the country have neither bowed to coercion nor to those in Canada who seek to facilitate it. In the weeks and months ahead, the RCMP will continue to do its important work, but this is a collective effort. If one sees something, they must say something by contacting the RCMP's national security information network. This would help us as we bring these individuals to justice.

I have said this before, but it bears repeating, especially as we grapple with the reality of extensive foreign interference in the lives of Canadians. Those who seek to undermine Canada's sovereignty will do and say things to delegitimize and undermine people's existence as a Canadian. We must not let them. Those who are Sikh are Canadian. Those who are Hindu are Canadian. Those who are Christian are Canadian. Those who are atheist are Canadian.

In whichever corner of this country, Canadians are free. Whatever Canadians look like, Canadians deserve safety. We are Canadian, and Canada will always fight to remain a free and open democracy.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important, as we look at this issue, that we centre and make best efforts to understand the deep pain of many Canadians right now. There are many Canadians, and they may be from a diaspora, with their parents being here, or they themselves have been victims of some of the hate and violence we are seeing across the country.

In particular, it has been raised with me that the RSS is a violent extremist group. So many across the country right now, particularly Sikh Canadians, are calling for accountability and to have this organization registered as a terrorist organization. Would the member comment on the important need of designating RSS as a terrorist organization to help protect Canadians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, many Canadians have brought forward concerns about the RSS. Fortunately, here in Canada, we have independent security agencies that go through a thorough analysis to do this. All this information has been forwarded to them.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member who spoke before my hon. colleague did not answer the question I put to him. I would like to ask my question again in the hopes of getting an answer from his colleague from the Liberal Party.

We are talking about taking action against foreign interference, and we are talking about government responsibility in relation to this scourge. My question is about government responsibility. On November 18, 2020, the House passed a motion calling on the government to create a foreign agent registry. The federal government did not begin public consultations until March 2023, and Bill C-70 was not introduced until 2024.

My question is very simple. Why did it take four years when everyone was aware of the problem?

• (1855)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the protection of Canadians, especially when it comes to foreign interference, I can assure the House that our government, from the day that we took office, has been very concerned with this and with taking the appropriate actions. We made sure we gave our security agencies the appropriate legal authority to take action to ensure these concerns would be addressed.

When it comes to the foreign registry and other issues, we want to make sure that they do get it right. When we put forward legislation or any type of strategy, we want to make sure that it would actually have the intended results. That is exactly what we did.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a difficult question. I will try to put it concisely.

The worst act of terrorism on Canadian soil ever was, of course, June 23, 1985, with the bombing of Air India by a very far different

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diaspora group, the Khalistan Sikh extremists, who, of course, are at the opposite end of the political spectrum from Prime Minister Modi and his Hindu nationalist, very right-wing party.

Even so, there are now operatives of the current Indian government operating on Canadian soil in ways that have alarmed the RCMP sufficiently that we are investigating homicides. That is plural. Being from that part of the world, my hon. colleague certainly understands this issue far better than I do. What can we realistically do to establish good relations with India, an important country in the world, while protecting the lives of Canadians from any form of extremist or terrorist on our soil?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, it does not matter who they are. If they commit any type of criminal activity or terrorism, our security agencies and the RCMP will find them and charge them. They will go to jail. That is what we always have to strive for.

When it comes to the actions that we can take, one is to send a message as parliamentarians by demonstrating to Canadians that all parliamentarians are united in this case. One of the things that was asked, as I said in my remarks, was for the leader of the Conservative Party to get that security clearance so he can make appropriate decisions on the information that he would learn, but he still refuses to get a security clearance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I echo many of the words the minister has put on the record. I appreciate and support what the minister is saying, and I hope that NSICOP takes this on as an issue in itself.

Can the minister just emphasize how important it is that the leader of the official opposition gets the security clearance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, I would say it is an absolute no-brainer, or common sense, for all party leaders to have this security clearance to do the work they need to do. The community has been suffering for four decades with intimidations, and finally people are getting some relief. Their anxiety is still there, and we have to make sure that we keep them safe.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul.

The revelations that the RCMP presented to Canadians last Monday were absolutely shocking. I talked to a number of people across the country who were shocked at the idea that agents of the Government of India were not only involved in foreign interference but also going further than that, and that foreign interference included murder; extortion; use of organized crime, with some international crime syndicates and some here in Canada; intimidation of Canadians; and coercion of Canadians. It got to the point at which the RCMP had to essentially warn Canadians. It specifically warned 13 Canadians that their lives were in danger because of foreign interference. There were concerns that their lives were at risk because of actions that agents of the Government of India may take. This is a clear affront to our sovereignty as a nation. This threatens our democracy and threatens us as a country.

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We must take steps to protect Canadians. We have to protect our sovereignty. We must protect our democracy. As well, we need to get answers for Canadians as to why this is happening and how this continues to happen. We need to take steps to stop foreign interference from all countries and, in this case, directly from India.

It is important that we, as parliamentarians, as well as the government, take national security seriously. We must take the threat of foreign interference very seriously.

The idea of foreign interference from India is not new. When I was younger, we would hear of people who had spoken up on human rights issues or other issues that the government of the day might not have agreed with. There would be concerns that they may not receive a visa to go back to India. That was the type of threat that we commonly heard previously. However, what the RCMP has uncovered now and the evidence it has of murder, extortion, coercion and the use of organized crime goes way beyond what we used to hear about before. It is at the point that, in the United States, a plot to murder an American was thwarted by U.S. authorities. U.S. security agencies were able to thwart that plot. Soon after that, arrests were made in the U.S. Unfortunately, we do not have that here.

The Prime Minister, at the Hogue commission, admitted that Canadian security agencies have known about foreign interference from India and that it has been committing foreign interference for years. The government has not taken appropriate steps to protect Canadians, even after a Canadian was assassinated on Canadian soil. Canadians continue to be under threat.

• (1900)

The fact is that, for a number of years, we have been attempting to bring solutions forward on foreign interference. It was our party that pushed for a foreign interference registry so that foreign agents would be registered. The Liberals rejected this, and the NDP supported them. Finally, after pressure from the Conservatives, we now have what is starting to become a foreign interference registry of agents to be registered to stop foreign interference.

Extortion is one method the RCMP has said agents of the Indian government are using to target Canadians. They are using international gangs. They are using and paying gangs here in Canada. One solution that we put forward was my private member's bill, Bill C-381. It is important that, as opposition members, we put solutions forward. The fact is that, right now in Canada, there is no minimum penalty for extortion, but with Bill C-381, anybody committing extortion would have received three years as a mandatory minimum sentence. It would have been four years if they committed that extortion with a firearm and five years if it was in relation to organized crime. That is precisely what we are talking about here today.

This is exactly what the RCMP has said is happening in this case: Through organized crime, Canadians are being extorted. However, the Liberals and the NDP voted against that bill. When we put solutions forward, unfortunately, the Liberals rejected those solutions. The fact of the matter is that Canada is now much more dangerous than it was nine years ago in every respect and in every category. Crime is up. Murders are up. It is less safe to be in Canada, and as we are finding out, foreign interference from India has gotten to an extreme level in which Canadians' lives are threat-

ened. We have already seen that a Canadian has been assassinated because of it.

It is important, and it should be, for the government to take more and better actions to protect Canadians.

• (1905)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's work on the private member's bill. I would like to ask the member, though it is pretty easy to always make it someone else's issue, if it is important, when it comes to the sovereignty of our country and defending Canadians' rights and freedoms and their ability to exist in our country, that all parties take this work seriously. I believe that we are Canadians first. I was born and raised in the Waterloo region. I did not choose to be born there or to be Canadian. I did choose my political party, but today we are talking about the loss of a Canadian.

Does everyone have a responsibility, and can the hon. member please confirm why his leader chooses not to get his security clearance?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely imperative that we, as a House of Commons and as parliamentarians, bring forward solutions to help the situation. The hon. member appreciates the fact that I brought forward a private member's bill to address the very serious issue of extortion in Canada, but she and her party voted against that solution. It is one thing for them to say that we all need to work together and address something, but it is another thing to ignore those issues, ignore solutions and continue on the way they have been going on.

The issue of foreign interference from India is a very serious one, and the government needs to take it more seriously.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean asked Liberal members a question twice, and we did not get an answer. That is a bit awkward for me because I think he is raising an important point.

In 2020, the House adopted a motion to raise this issue and to call for a foreign agent registry because of foreign interference. The House called for that registry in November 2020. It is now 2024 and nothing has changed. Consultations began last year in 2023.

Does my colleague think it is right to take three or four years to react to a situation that requires an urgent decision and action? Does he think that is acceptable?

[*English*]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question, and he is absolutely correct. The Liberals would not answer that question, and there is a reason for that: They do not take this issue seriously.

We, as a Conservative Party, have been asking for and presenting solutions, such as having a registry for foreign agents. That registry would have helped in this situation, but unfortunately, the Liberals did not bring that forward.

The member is correct in saying that there was a unanimous consent motion in the House of Commons to bring one forward, yet there was no solution by the Liberals. There is one now, but now they are saying that they are consulting. They do not take this issue seriously.

• (1910)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was a time here in this place when different leaders of political parties could not get a security clearance. They were not allowed to, and they had to actually fight to be able to gain access to that; that changed. Now, the Conservative leader is fighting to stay away from that security clearance on this particular issue.

It has been standard practice to ensure that our democracy is protected by all Parliaments and all political parties via security clearance. Will the Conservatives go public with other issues that they will not get a security clearance on?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, that absolutely does not make any sense because, when the RCMP discussed this issue with all Canadians on Monday, the Leader of the Opposition received a briefing from Nathalie Drouin, national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, the deputy minister of foreign affairs at Global Affairs Canada and the director of CSIS. All of them gave the Leader of the Opposition a briefing on this issue.

The only difference is that the Leader of the Opposition is the only leader who will not be gagged by the Prime Minister by taking that oath. The job of the Leader of the Opposition is to hold the government to account, and if he were to take that oath, he would not be able to do that.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House among my colleagues and talk about this critical issue facing Canadians. I know many Canadians have been hearing about this over the past week; certainly, for this kind of news to break on a Thanksgiving Monday was quite unprecedented, so I am honoured to put some words on the record. Certainly, we are hearing about very serious allegations from the RCMP out of what has been tied to Indian government officials allegedly plotting to work with criminal entities in Canada to extort, coerce and murder people. They are connected to criminal entities in India. In fact, it has been alleged that a number of individuals have been murdered in Canada as a result of some of these outrageous affronts to our sovereignty.

As a result of these criminal activities, we have really had our whole system of government rocked, and a relationship that we thought was quite strong is now an issue of concern. That should concern everyone in this place because we need strong allies, friends and relationships internationally. It was disappointing to hear of these allegations. It was odd and very surprising to see the RCMP have this unprecedented press conference out of the blue on a Thanksgiving Monday. The RCMP officials, remarkably, said that about 13 individuals are currently in peril and that they did not feel that they could protect them with their own resources; therefore,

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they had to go public. It is quite unprecedented that we have come to such a point with foreign interference that the RCMP had to hold an emergency press conference to see if they could protect 13 individuals residing in Canada. It is really unbelievable, and it was quite shocking to be eating turkey dinner while learning about some of these details.

Interestingly, about a year ago, the Prime Minister got up in the House of Commons and also did something quite unprecedented: He made these ties, saying that there were some very serious allegations that an individual was murdered in Canada in connection to the Government of India. I do not believe any government, at least in recent history, has ever gotten up and done something like that: accuse a foreign government in that way. It was quite shocking.

What is really interesting is that this was about 13 months ago. We had the Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Party, taking this quite unprecedented action in the House of Commons. By calling out a country that is supposed to be our friend in such a way, he was in essence accusing it of murder. However, nothing really happened. Then, 13 months later, we have an unprecedented emergency RCMP announcement, and six diplomats from India are kicked out of Canada in quite a dramatic fashion. This is done because 13 individuals are in peril and many more have been intimidated or coerced.

I mention this to say that the Prime Minister's unprecedented action did not seem to deliver any real results to stop foreign interference. It did nothing to fix the problem; in fact, it got worse. That really speaks to his lack of ability to ensure foreign interference in this country is brought to a stop. Certainly, anyone in this country who is connected to these illegal, criminal and murderous actions needs to be held fully accountable, full stop. We cannot, as a country, allow anybody or any foreign country to come in and murder, coerce or extort our citizens or threaten to take visas away. We have heard a lot of this going on with China as well, with election interference. We also see Russian disinformation, as well as intimidation of Iranian Canadians from the IRGC.

• (1915)

It took the Liberal government about six years, I believe, of our calling for the Liberal government to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. It took six years to ensure that standard in Canada to say that we would no longer engage and that this kind of foreign interference from Iran, for example, would no longer be allowed. It took many years for the Liberals to act on that.

However, we have heard more and more about foreign interference in the last number of years, while in fact what we have seen from the Prime Minister are his repeated denials that there has been an issue. We saw this almost every day, beginning when there was a CSIS leak to *The Globe and Mail* regarding Chinese election interference in Canadian elections. "Nothing to see here" was really the message of the day from the Liberal government. In fact, they were more concerned about the leaks.

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It was very much the case that Conservatives had to drag this government kicking and screaming to an authentic, professional, robust public inquiry into foreign interference, which we are finally seeing now, run by Justice Hogue, but it took a very long time to get there, and a lot of effort from us, to hold the government accountable and have that type of inquiry.

Members will remember that there was a sort of “in between” period when the Prime Minister finally relented and decided to sort of do something about foreign interference. The Liberals had the David Johnston report, although it was found that he was quite close to Mr. Trudeau and was possibly not applying the most critical eye on what he may or may not have done on foreign interference, so that was in essence scrapped. Mr. Johnston quit midway through.

Then, finally, we got an authentic, professional, robust inquiry into foreign interference, but it took so long and so many leaks from CSIS to sound the alarm. In fact, if there had not been leaks from CSIS to *The Globe and Mail*, we would probably not even be here talking about foreign interference. They were the ones who blew the whistle because no one was listening to them. In fact, we have a lot of accounts of national security reports just not making it to the Prime Minister's desk. He was not reading them. This was not something that he was interested in.

In fact, I would draw members' attention to a number of the quite concerning comments in the official report from the NSICOP committee about how seriously our Prime Minister takes foreign interference and perhaps why we got here. For example, the NSICOP report said that:

Given the risks posed by foreign interference to Canada's national security, the Committee expected the government to act. It was slow to do so.

It further stated that:

[The government] has yet to implement an effective response to foreign interference in democratic processes and institutions. This is despite a significant body of intelligence reporting, the completion of foundational policy work, public consultations and having been called to do so by this Committee.

I think Canadians should be concerned and I think that they are waking up to this. How did we get to a place where China, India, Iran, Russia and Pakistan are all just bullying Canada and intimidating our citizens and are allegedly connected to murder in some cases? This is very serious. How did we get here? Well, we have had the same Prime Minister for nine years, and it has never been worse. What does that say about his leadership?

As Canadians, we should be calling on our government. In fact, the Privy Council Office, when the Liberal Prime Minister first got elected in 2015, had a very official report called “Open and Accountable Government”. It explicitly says that national security and international affairs are explicitly the special responsibility of the Prime Minister.

What I have seen from this Prime Minister are excuses. I have seen him not wanting to talk about it and dragging his feet, whether it is on China, India, Russia, Iran, Pakistan or others, yet it is solely his “special responsibility” according to his own “Open and Accountable Government” report from 2015, the governing document that was going to be the one document that this government would

turn to to show Canadians what the responsibilities of ministers and the Prime Minister are.

National security is his special responsibility and his special responsibility alone, yet here we are, so I would say that he has failed in fulfilling his special responsibility to ensure that foreign interference is stopped and that our citizens are protected.

It has come to a point where there are allegations that foreign countries are literally murdering people in this country. Mr. Nijjar was a citizen. What is happening is incredibly serious, and I appreciate that we have the opportunity to talk about it in this debate.

● (1920)

In my last minute, I want to say that what would be real leadership in this regard is this: We know there is this list of names that the Prime Minister seems to have weaponized at this foreign interference inquiry, which is very disappointing. He has turned it into a circus. Other countries hold members of Parliament and others accountable by releasing the names of those individuals who have been in connection with foreign governments and working to undermine them. We have seen this in the United Kingdom with Christine Lee named and shamed by the U.K. government. Why is it we cannot know the names of the individuals who have been candidates and former parliamentarians or current ones? What is the Liberal government trying to hide when it will not release them?

Things like that shed a real light and send a message to anyone looking to undermine Canada that we are going to find out what they are up to and who they are and that we will hold them accountable for it. That is what the government should be doing and what it failed to do for nine years. We are going to hold the government accountable for that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening to talk about foreign interference, and the Prime Minister provided information last week about how Conservative members, former members or candidates allegedly had something to do with India's foreign interference. That is our understanding.

Now, the leader of the Conservative Party and member for Carleton is refusing to get his security clearance. I am not looking to cast stones. I just want to understand why he does not want to get it. If he is doing this as the Leader of the Opposition, will he do it as prime minister too? Will he refuse to receive sensitive information on the pretext that he could no longer talk about that issue in public? That is the reason he is giving for not getting his security clearance.

I see the Speaker signalling to me that my time is up. I get the impression that I am being given a lot less time than some other members. This is the second time this has happened.

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have been very clear on this. We feel, as do others, that this security clearance would, in essence, be a gag order. It is very transparent, in fact, why the Prime Minister dropped this so-called bombshell and made a circus out of what was otherwise a very professional undertaking, the foreign interference inquiry. It is because his own caucus is looking to revolt. There has been an open rebellion within that caucus, and it came to a head this Wednesday. Of course, as I outlined in my remarks, there has been very much a failed record from the Prime Minister on preventing foreign interference.

I will conclude with this. It is from the longest-serving chief of staff in Canadian history, the right-hand woman to the Prime Minister. She said that receiving a briefing would prevent recipients from using the information “in any manner. Even where that is not the case, briefing political parties on sensitive intelligence regarding an MP could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position, because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process.”

She is saying it would gag them. We are saying it would gag us. We are not going to do that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to challenge my hon. colleague on that last point, because we had former high-level CSIS executives saying, on the position the Leader of the Opposition is taking right now, that there is no reasonable justification for it.

We have Wesley Wark, who has advised both Liberal and Conservative governments, saying that it is nonsensical. We are not talking about a gag order here; we are talking about the ability of a leader to take action within his or her caucus. That is what it is all about.

If we do have members of Parliament who are compromised, leaders have an incredible amount of power in their caucus. They can prevent MPs from sitting on certain committees. They can prevent them from running again as members under a party banner.

Again, through you, why does the leader of the Conservative Party think he knows better than former CSIS executives?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I have shared this with the NDP member. I find it interesting that the former leader of the NDP would agree with the leader of the Conservative Party that in essence it would be a gag order.

Again, there is a very political reason that the Liberals are doing this right now. What was interesting in that foreign interference inquiry is that the Liberal leader, as we already knew, later admitted on the record that of course there are members of the Liberals on that list. What has he done about it? He has really done nothing. In fact, he denied there was any issue at all, so I feel that if the New Democrats want something done on foreign interference, they should probably stop propping up a government that has done nothing about it for nine years.

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• (1925)

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member of Parliament said that nothing was done from September 18, when the Prime Minister announced these serious allegations. I think she is failing to remember that 22 people have been charged with extortion and eight charged for the murder of Mr. Nijjar and others.

Now we have an RCMP commissioner and the deputy commissioner stating that they have made numerous attempts and in fact actually showed the evidence. I do not know what more the Conservative opposition is expecting.

I would like to know why, when every other leader of this House, including the Green Party leader, the NDP leader and I believe the Bloc leader, have been able to see the evidence under oath, the Conservative Party leader will not take it?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I think what I am expecting is what all Canadians are expecting, which is a leader who is going to make our country strong, a leader who is not going to have our country, after nine years, turn into a country that is being bullied by multiple foreign adversaries, and now friends, in fact.

That is the status quo under the Liberal government, which that member is a part of, a government that has allowed the country to become so weak that other countries have no problems waltzing in here and murdering citizens. That is the situation. Since the Prime Minister got up in the House 13 months ago, it has come to the point that the RCMP had to announce, on Thanksgiving weekend, that 13 more individuals are in prison.

I would say that this is a failed record.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry about earlier. I know that you are fair. I did not mean to criticize you. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Montcalm.

The consequences of foreign interference are quite real. They are real for security, for democracy and for the well-being of our communities.

Last March, the foreign interference commission heard testimony from several representatives of various communities about the impact that foreign interference can have on the lives of members of their diaspora. These representatives voiced their concerns about the authoritarian regimes that they said had the power to ruin their lives and the lives of their families.

For example, the Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance testified that many Russians in Canada have parents or other family members who stayed behind in Russia. The organization said that Russian diplomats in Canada were using video surveillance and social media to identify people protesting against Moscow.

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One human rights activist said that members of the Iranian community in Canada wear masks, sunglasses and hats at protests so they cannot be identified. According to some sources, when activists travel to Iran, their cell phones are confiscated. They are persecuted and interrogated, and they fear for the well-being of their families, who are also pressured and interrogated.

Reports from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, also showed that China targeted the members of Parliament who sponsored a motion to recognize the genocide of the Uyghurs, a motion to which I moved an amendment that was adopted. A representative from the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project stated that Beijing is engaged in a systematic campaign of repression against this community. I am very familiar with the Uyghur community. Their word can be trusted. Uyghur Canadians have said that they could not share news of a joyful occasion with their family back home because communication had been blocked. He added that some Uyghurs in Canada do not even know if their family members are still alive or if they have died.

Other diaspora communities on Canadian soil have the same concerns. I am thinking, for example, of the Hong Kong, Tibetan and Taiwanese diaspora communities.

I asked my Liberal colleague a question earlier, but no one was able to give me an answer. On November 18, 2020, the House of Commons adopted a motion calling on the government to create a foreign agent registry. That was on November 18, 2020. The federal government did not begin public consultations on the creation of a foreign agent registry until March 2023. When I am told that these things take time because they are bills that have a real impact on people's lives, that is not true. The government did not start drafting a bill. It started the consultations in 2023, even though the motion was adopted in the fall of 2020. At that point, foreign interference had been known to be a problem for a long time, and yet the government still dragged its feet on this issue.

It is worth noting that the government did everything in its power to avoid a public inquiry into foreign interference in the election. As members will recall, it denied our requests over and over. After several months of the opposition hounding the government and the public losing all confidence in the so-called special rapporteur, the Liberal government was forced to give in and open a public inquiry. It took time. I even held a press conference with representatives from all the communities targeted by the Chinese Communist regime. We had Tibetans, Hong Kongers, Taiwanese people and Uyghurs there with us. Three days later, the special rapporteur decided to resign and a public inquiry was launched.

• (1930)

That inquiry is how we learned that although the member for Don Valley North initially claimed to know nothing about the help he illegally received from China during his nomination, he actually knew more than he publicly let on.

After denying the problem of foreign interference for years, delaying the public inquiry into foreign interference and then also delaying the implementation of a foreign agent registry, as suggested by my colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières, the Canadian government finally seems to recognize the problem. Yes, I did say “seems to”.

The Bloc Québécois thinks it was appropriate to expel the Indian diplomats identified by the RCMP as having played a role in the attacks on Canadian citizens. Nonetheless, I want to note that, today, we are seeing the extent to which foreign actors feel they can act with impunity in Canada. It is the detrimental consequence of successive governments, Conservative and Liberal alike, deciding to turn a blind eye for commercial or electoral reasons. The negligence of consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments has led foreign states to believe they are free to attack Canadian sovereignty and democracy.

On October 14, the RCMP confirmed that India was behind the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia on June 18, 2023. Diplomats from the Indian high commission allegedly hired criminals to assassinate this Sikh opponent. According to the available information, the Indian high commission was engaged in other clandestine activities, including intelligence gathering for the Indian government.

When Parliament resumed in the fall of 2023, the federal government finally reacted to the Indian government's interference when the Prime Minister publicly accused India of murdering Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. However, he did that without having any real plan for what to do next, particularly in terms of Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy.

Many people, including the Bloc Québécois, are wondering about the Prime Minister of Canada's highly questionable choice to level allegations against India the first day Parliament resumed in September 2023, but that is not surprising. The Canadian government does not seem to have a plan when it comes to foreign affairs or international relations in general. My colleague, the member for Montarville, has been disheartened to see this day after day, week after week, month after month, in short, since our work resumed in the House of Commons.

Most of the time, as parliamentarians, we get a sense that this government is making up its approach to foreign affairs as it goes. Back in 2015, members will recall, the Prime Minister said “Canada is back” in reference to Canada's place in the world. I think it would have been more appropriate to say that “Canada is in the back”. That is where we are today. We are in the back, unable to keep up.

We got proof positive of that today. A Quebec sovereigntist was the one who said it: Canada absolutely must get back to being a serious player on the international stage. As I said earlier, the foreign interference problem is nothing new. It has been out in the open for a long time, yet successive governments have really dragged their feet.

The first victims of this foreign interference are not necessarily Canada's democratic institutions. It is possible, but the very first victims of foreign interference are often opponents who sought refuge in Canada and in Quebec. They are people who thought they were safe. Now, they look at what is going on, watch the news, read the newspapers and they see foreign powers doing as they please on Canadian soil, even attacking foreign nationals who came here looking for a safe haven.

Some of my Uyghur friends used to ask me if I feared for my safety because I was banned from China as a result of my work with the Uyghurs. I have never feared for my safety, and I never would. I am a Canadian parliamentarian; they are not crazy enough to come after me. However, it is different for the people I work with such as the Uyghurs, people from Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan and so on. These people have family back in China. The Uyghurs are just one example. They are the brave ones. They are scared witless because they have family members who are stuck over there.

Today, when they turn on the TV, read the newspaper or listen to the radio, they learn that Canada is allowing foreign agents within its borders. Imagine how painful it must be, how frightened people in these situations must be. It is scary, what we put them through.

● (1935)

It is absolutely necessary that we have this debate tonight. The government needs to wake up and understand what foreign interference is. Yes, foreign interference in our elections is harmful, but the primary victims are real people. These are men, women and children who fear for their own safety and for the safety of their families. This government needs to wake up. The Conservatives need to act responsibly and in a non-partisan manner. This needs to be resolved.

When Quebec becomes a country, it will look to Canada as an example of what not to do as a country on the international stage.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saannich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the comment my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean made when he asked a Conservative member a question. He asked why the hon. leader of the official opposition refused to get his security clearance. I agree with him.

As the member for Edmonton Mill Woods said, the leader of the Conservative Party received a briefing. That is true.

[English]

I got the briefing and I asked if the leader of the Conservative Party was able to get the same briefing. They said no, they could not give him as many details as they gave me because he does not have his clearance.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, that is a legitimate question.

The leader of the official opposition aspires to be the prime minister of Canada. Today, he is telling us that he does not want to get his security clearance or see the documents because it would prevent him from speaking publicly about the issue.

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Is he saying that, if he ever becomes the prime minister of Canada, he will refuse to see sensitive information because he is afraid that he will not be able to speak publicly about that issue? That does not make any sense. If he does not want to get his security clearance, then he should come up with a better reason than that. The reason that he is giving right now is not a good one.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy on this important issue. I think we agree on many aspects of this.

I would like to hear the member's position in regard to the fact that we are finally having this debate today. It has been on the minds of so many individuals across the country, particularly Sikh and Muslim communities as they have been dealing with and raising the alarm of foreign interference for a very long time in Canada. We are finally getting to a position where we can do things, like ban the RSS.

Is that something the member would support?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I think that, by having this debate this evening, we will be able to take a closer look at this issue, come up with suggestions and perhaps some solutions, and reach a consensus. This debate enables us work across party lines and to try to sit down together as responsible parliamentarians.

Unfortunately, what may end up happening this evening is that the Liberals and the Conservatives will start accusing each other and blaming each other for foreign interference in Canada. These two parties have taken turns forming the government for years, for decades. They have been trading power back and forth since 1867.

Today, we are dealing with the results of these two parties' concerted inaction. Unfortunately, rather than looking for solutions, they may end up engaging in partisan quarrels, which I think are futile during such an important debate.

● (1940)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member across the way whether his leader has taken the necessary steps to obtain his security clearance.

Can the member tell me whether he thinks it is important for all the party leaders to obtain their security clearance in order to be well informed on issues of national security so they can present a united front in Canada and internationally?

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Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, my leader has indeed started the process and I think that he will get his security clearance shortly. There are just a few small formalities left. He did indeed decide to move forward responsibly so that he could verify whether Bloc Québécois candidates or members have been directly or indirectly, wittingly or unwittingly involved in foreign interference. I would be surprised if that were the case, but my leader is proceeding responsibly. If ever Bloc Québécois candidates or members were involved, my leader will be able to decide whether those people can stay in the party or not. I hope to be a candidate in the next election. No, I am joking.

Yes, I think it is simply a matter of responsibility when a person decides to lead a party, especially when they want to lead the country.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tonight we are talking about foreign interference. After listening to all of my colleagues' speeches and concerns, it occurred to me that the word "interference" rhymes with the words "negligence", "indifference" and "complacency".

Consider water as an analogy. When water seeps in, when it erodes a road or shoreline, it does not happen suddenly. It happens gradually. We are here, tonight, debating foreign interference because of the previous governments' negligence and, I would say, their indifference, with one consequence being the assassination of a Sikh Canadian on Canadian soil. India considered this person a terrorist, but the RCMP questioned him and did not see fit to extradite him. Nevertheless, international regard for Canada is so low that India, through its representatives, managed to send contract killers to murder a Sikh Canadian. This is no trivial matter.

Tonight we can also talk about the fact that, when it comes to interference, the Conservative leader is more interested in being free to promote his video clips than in discovering the truth. A respectable and careful attitude would involve going to the source to find out what the whole thing is about, especially since it also appears that people in certain parties were involved in foreign interference or may have been targeted by it.

I would like to clarify something so that people understand. A Conservative member said earlier that Conservatives deserve the credit for the fact that we have a foreign agent registry and that the government was unwilling to create a foreign agent registry.

● (1945)

The member for Trois-Rivières tried to make that happen. His name was chosen in the private members' draw and he drafted a bill to create such a registry. In the end, the government introduced a bill in that regard, Bill C-70, but not until four years later. The government reacted. I have to give it credit for that, but it did so four years later, or as we say in my riding, an hour later in the Maritimes, which shows that the government did not really take this seriously.

There is a conflict between India and Punjab. Punjab is a province of India that borders Pakistan and India, and the Sikh community in India would like to create a country, a state, called Khalistan. The Sikh separatists are claiming their corner of the world, based on their religion, and the Indian government has total-

ly prevented the Sikhs from obtaining that recognition since the partition of India in 1947.

This conflict, which has been going on since that time, has been marked by acts of extreme violence perpetrated by both Indian governments and Sikh representatives. These include the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the bombing of an Air India flight.

The conflict finally reached Canada's shores in 2023, when Mr. Nijjar was assassinated. The absolute worst thing a country can do is fail to defend and protect the people who live there. That is the absolute worst thing, from a disrespected G7 country. People are coming here to commit their crimes.

Canada then decided to react by expelling diplomats. We supported that. The Indian government also retaliated. What is important to remember in this story, however, is that interference in a country does not happen overnight. Give them an inch, they will take a mile. The more the government loosens the reins, the more it will come to realize that it has zero control at any given time.

I identify first and foremost as a Quebecker, as everyone knows, but I find it embarrassing as a parliamentarian in this place that we have reached this point. What I also find embarrassing is how long it took the government to be transparent. It did not want a commission on foreign interference. It appointed a special rapporteur to buy some time. The rapporteur then said what we thought he would say, namely, that there was nothing there.

There is nothing there? Come on. Perhaps we were talking about foreign interference based on election results, but interference is much broader than that, and we wanted a commission to clear up the issue of foreign interference in all its forms once and for all.

● (1950)

When I say that "interference" rhymes with "indifference", "complacency" and "negligence", that is what I am talking about. I do not think many people would tell me I am wrong. Even on the government side, I would find it hard to believe that they did not realize they were asleep at the switch.

This issue was raised by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean when he said that the government was dragging its feet. I do not understand. During his first four years in power, when his government had a majority, the Prime Minister seemed to be focusing only on matters of foreign policy and neglecting domestic matters.

Then he had to deal with a pandemic that revealed all the Conservative government's failures that he should have addressed, but did not. He did not care. The Prime Minister travelled around the world, but what for? Given the state of foreign interference, we have to wonder what it was all for. He took a trip to India and took some nice photos for the upcoming election, but he could not even thoroughly, properly and respectfully address an issue like the one that ended in the murder of a Canadian national.

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I am a little ashamed of that, not because I care that much about the Prime Minister and his indifference, but because if Quebec were a country, this type of thing would certainly never happen there.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the Bloc Québécois and the New Democrats are quite aligned on this issue, which pertains to the safety and security of Canadians. One thing that is troubling for, I think, both the member and me is that over a year ago, when the New Democrats brought forward a motion to establish a public commission that would review all aspects of foreign interference, including foreign interference by India, the Prime Minister voted against it. Earlier today, in this place, we noticed the Liberals defeat the establishment of a special committee that would study Canada-India relations for the purpose of identifying measures that would combat foreign interference.

Does the member want to elaborate or speculate on why the Liberals are voting against these measures?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, any time I see bad moves like that, I cannot help but wonder what they could mean and what interests are behind them. Are they political or commercial interests? We have seen how former ministers and elected officials have found themselves working for major Chinese companies shortly after leaving office.

I do not have an answer to that question, but it needs to be answered.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

He started off by saying, and rightly so, that the Liberal government clearly did not want a foreign agent registry, just as it did not want an inquiry. The special rapporteur was appointed instead, and in November 2020, the House of Commons adopted a motion. We have been going in circles for the past three or four years.

Now, on the other side of the House, the leader of the Conservative Party says he does not want to look into foreign influence and he does not want to get the clearance needed to look at the reports, because if he sees something worth criticizing, he will not be able to talk about it. The Conservatives may be mixed up in foreign interference. I think the Liberals might be as well.

Is there anyone in the House who is capable of being a reliable prime minister? Does my colleague agree that there is no way to study the issue of foreign interference in the current Parliament?

● (1955)

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, according to what the Prime Minister said under oath, one political party has some problems with foreign interference. There could be people in that party who are more likely to be faced with that. I am trying to choose my words carefully. These people could be influenced or could be dealing with foreign interference.

When a prime minister says something like that under oath, the Leader of the Opposition, who is responsible for a political party and who aspires to hold the highest rank in the House of Commons,

must look into that and must get the necessary information. It is a matter of trust. He must be able to take stock of the situation. He cannot just using lying as an excuse to spread fear. Politicians have to be responsible.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is an opportunity to have some difficult conversations.

I would like to ask my colleague if he can help me reconcile the fact that in Canada, separatist movements from Quebec, such as the Bloc Québécois, are democratically represented in the House of Commons by elected officials, whereas in India or other countries, the state often accuses Sikh separatists of extremism and violence, rather than inviting them to take part in peaceful, democratic political discourse.

I know this is a difficult conversation, but I think it is important to have it here.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I am indeed an independence activist, or, as my rivals would say, a separatist. India calls its Sikh citizens separatists. My belief in independence is based on democratic values. I have said before that I am a sovereigntist, because the democratic ideal is rooted in the sovereignty of the people.

In that sense, I do not think any comparison is possible between Quebec separatists and Sikh separatists. Our movement is not based on religion, and I can think of few violent episodes or years in the history of our movement.

In fact, the 1976 election of the Parti Québécois laid all such claims to rest.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

New Democrats fundamentally believe, as do many people in the House, that Canadians have the right to feel safe. They should feel safe in their homes. They should be safe when they go to work, at their places of work and when they come back home again. I know, though, that when guns and gangs are involved and bullets are flying, no one is safe. Even if it is a particular target, there is an impact on everyone in that community. This includes everyone who is walking around the block, kids who are playing in the streets and kids who are playing at a park nearby; everyone is at risk when there is violence.

The reality is that what we have learned from the RCMP is something that I do not think any of us have heard in our lifetime. The RCMP has credible evidence that a foreign government directed, engaged, hired and instructed gang members in Canada to commit acts of violence against Canadians. That is an outrageous scenario, but it is where we find ourselves. That foreign government is the Indian government. The Modi government hired gangs to target Canadians.

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I remember receiving numerous calls from people across the country saying that they were being extorted, that they were worried about the rise in violence in their communities and that they were worried about gun violence. There was an increase in car robberies as well. The RCMP said, in a very shocking statement regarding the length and breadth of the crime that we saw in the past year, that there are significant ties to gang activities directed, allegedly, by Indian government agents, by Indian government diplomats. They were expelled.

From the beginning, when we started seeing more and more mounting evidence of foreign interference, New Democrats took it seriously; we said we needed a public inquiry. This is not something for partisan games. This is something to be looked at with the seriousness and the independence of an inquiry, so we can have clear recommendations that keep Canadians safe from interference. At every turn, the Liberals put up blockades. They said no. They said that a public inquiry was not necessary. We had to fight to get to the public inquiry.

What is even worse is the fact that, in the House of Commons, there is only one leader of a federal party who refuses to get security clearance. There is only one federal leader who refuses to find out what is actually going on. I believe that we need a united front; Canadians expect our leaders to come together and say that, if a foreign government is engaging in a campaign of terror on Canadians, we are all going to stand together and denounce that; we are all going to say it is wrong. The behaviour of the Conservative leader shows the Modi government that there is one leader in Canada willing to look the other way, who does not want to know the details about this foreign interference. He does not want to know what is going on or have additional information that could help keep Canada safer and could address the allegations of foreign interference that touch his own party.

Let us recap what the Conservative leader knows. He knows there are allegations about his own leadership contest and a previous leadership contest for the Conservative Party of Canada, saying that foreign governments were involved in some element of interference. Specifically, there are allegations about the Indian government. He knows that. It is in the public discourse. He also knows that members of his caucus and/or candidates are also potentially compromised. He knows that he could seek security clearance. He has been offered that opportunity, yet he refuses.

● (2000)

Refusing to get a security clearance means that the Conservative leader will allow the rot in his party to continue. He is clearly saying that he is not prioritizing Canada; instead, he is putting his partisan interests ahead of the country. He is saying that protecting his party is more important than protecting the country, and he is wrong in that.

In today's emergency debate, one thing is clear. We need to send a very clear message to the Indian government that parliamentarians stand united against this type of activity: criminal behaviour, putting Canadians' lives at risk and putting our security and safety at risk. All of us take this seriously, and that is why I urge the Conservative leader to get his security clearance, find out what is going

on and take the necessary steps to protect his party and, most importantly, our country.

Turning back to the federal government, there are additional steps we are calling for. We said that we need a Canada-India relations committee to look at the ongoing elements of interference by the Indian government. It would keep this front and centre in our minds, so we can constantly make sure that every step possible is being taken to keep Canadians safe and that any material is reviewed as it comes forward. We have also demanded an emergency meeting of the public safety committee to review additional steps to keep Canadians safe.

We are calling on the government to work with our allies. We know that the United States is currently dealing with a similar series of circumstances involving the attempted assassination of an American citizen. The American government has laid charges. It has charged Indian agents, and it is looking for an additional investigation and inquiry into this. The United Kingdom has also taken steps and is involved in a similar scenario, in which the Indian government is alleged to have interfered with its citizens. Three G7 nations need to work together to send a clear message of denunciation of these heinous acts of violence being perpetrated by the Indian government.

In addition, we have called for another series of measures. There is a violent, extremist, right-wing organization known as the RSS. It is a militant group based out of India that promotes violence against minority communities; it is very divisive, and it has branches across the world, including here in Canada. It needs to be banned. We want the most severe of consequences for anyone found to be involved in this campaign of terror against Canadians, whether as orchestrators on the Indian government side or as individuals carrying out those acts of violence. Everyone needs to be brought to justice and have the full weight of the law imposed upon them. We also want severe and strict sanctions imposed on the diplomats involved. They were expelled, but severe diplomatic sanctions are needed to send a clear message of denunciation.

Finally, what we are hearing from many Canadians is that they are worried about whether there is an information-sharing arrangement between Canada and India. The Indian government has engaged criminal gangs to commit various sorts of violence against Canadians. In light of those allegations, we should be pausing information sharing with that country. We should not be giving intelligence regarding Canadian citizens to a country and a government alleged to have hired gangs to commit violence against Canadians for over a year, including by killing Canadians. This is a time to acknowledge the fear and the worry that Canadians have, as well as the real pain that Canadians are going through.

People have suffered from the impacts of that violence. Canadians have lost loved ones because of it. There are those living with the trauma of having experienced the violence, of being threatened, of being harassed and of having guns fired at their homes. Business owners have been traumatized by extortion. Given how serious this is, New Democrats have said very clearly that this is a moment in which we need to put Canada first and party second.

I ask everyone in the House to put the country first; to put the safety and security of Canadians first; and to put the safety and security of our democracy, our sovereignty and our nation first. I ask them to protect Canadians and do the right thing.

• (2005)

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member of Parliament for Burnaby South is the leader of one of the major parties in the House. He has taken the oath; he has seen the NSICOP report, and I believe he has also seen evidence of what the Prime Minister stated in the House about the Indian government with regard to the Hardeep Nijjar murder.

After reviewing those reports and taking the oath, does the member see any reason the Conservative leader should not do so?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I see absolutely no reason the Conservative leader should not get his security and receive information concerning allegations that directly touch his party. Not only that, but I also want to point out that there is not a single Conservative member in the House right now. Given how serious this is, as we are talking about a matter of this severity—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize, but I have to remind the hon. member we do not mention presences or absences in the House.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I did not mention presence, I just mentioned their absence, but I understand that I cannot mention the fact that no Conservative member is in the House. I should not mention that they are not present at all.

What I will mention, though, is that this is very serious. This is something we might have thought was maybe a spy film when we heard about it. That a foreign government hired gang members to attack and terrorize community members, to kill Canadians, is something someone would think is the intro for a film. However, this is real life. This is what is going on in Canada. This is the RCMP's evidence being brought before Canadians, so we need to take it seriously. All leaders need to realize that the priority now is keeping Canada safe. All Canadians are at risk when a foreign government is so cavalier that it engages in dangerous activities in that way. All Canadians must take this seriously.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the Democratic Party for his steadfast support of Canadians right across the country who may fear for their own safety. In my own community of Edmonton Griesbach, I get reports of community members whose houses are being shot at. They are scared to report this to police; they are paralyzed.

We truly need to see country before party, but what we are noticing is that the Liberals have been too slow to act. They voted against the establishment of an India-Canada committee. They voted against the NDP's foreign interference commission into India.

In addition, the Conservatives are compromised. Their leader will not even get a security clearance, and they refuse to act after learning that their leadership race was interfered in by the Government of India.

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This is why New Democrats are important. This is why New Democrats need to see accountability. It is why I believe that New Democrats are the only party positioned to truly get to the bottom of this.

Will the member speak to how urgent this issue is and speak directly to those voices right across the country who are fearing for their loved ones and for themselves?

• (2010)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, the truth is exactly as the member described it: People are very afraid. I met with community members who talk about the impact this has had on their lives. I have talked to folks who just hear about this and are worried about what it means. People who have seen the impacts of guns and gangs in their lives know that, if more guns and gangs are encouraged, incited, promoted or supported, it means that everyone's life is at risk. It means there is more danger and less security. People feel a deep sense of unease.

We have a responsibility in the House; we need to make a commitment that we are going to do everything possible to keep people safe. As the member pointed out, there are serious critiques of both the Liberals and Conservatives. The Liberals have been very slow to act. In fact, they have resisted action time and time again. Far worse, the Conservatives do not even want to act. They do not want to know what is going on. Not only is the party compromised, but I think their leadership is compromised with the unwillingness to put the country first. It should disqualify the Conservative leader from seeking any higher office. If a person is unwilling to know what is going on, if there are serious and imminent threats impacting Canadians and they do not want to know, then that disqualifies them from being able to lead this country.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise for the very serious emergency debate that has seized the House of Commons, which was brought forward by the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South. What we are talking about tonight is, of course, the very serious allegations that have come forward over the last week, presented by the RCMP.

Before I get into the crux of my speech tonight, I want to say that as the member of Parliament for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I represent a fairly large South Asian population. I want to tell them directly that we are taking this issue seriously. I know there is a lot of fear in that community, and I know there are some very complicated relationships with the Indian government.

I also want to say that I bear no personal ill will toward the country of India or the Government of India, but the circumstances that have presented themselves to us demand that we as parliamentarians stand up and act. No self-respecting country would let these types of allegations slip by without a firm and serious response. That is precisely what we in the NDP are doing.

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Let us go back to the bombshell RCMP announcement that came on Thanksgiving Monday, October 14, which presented evidence that agents of the Government of India were involved in “serious criminal activity in Canada”: homicides, extortions and other criminal acts of violence; the use of organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian community in Canada; and, of course, interference in the democratic process.

This is not new. This is something our country has been exposed to for over a year. It started in September 2023 when the Prime Minister stood in this chamber and used the power given to him as a member of cabinet to make an explosive statement about the Government of India's interference in our internal processes. Since then, the Hogue commission has released an interim report, and in that report, we see references to India's clandestine activities littered throughout. That was followed, of course, by the report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which detailed everything India has been doing, from election interference to the use of criminal activity to terrorize the South Asian population.

This is not just coming from hearsay. Both of these reports are based on credible and solid intelligence gathered by the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. It is from the men and women out there in the field working on our country's behalf, and they are ringing the alarm bell of what India and other countries are currently doing in Canada.

I think the most worrying part of the NSICOP report is in paragraph 73. I am going to quote it because it was quite the revelation: “This paragraph was deleted to remove injurious or privileged information. The paragraph described India's alleged interference in a Conservative Party of Canada leadership race.”

We know those tentacles are running deep. We know that members of Parliament for several months now have been operating under a cloud of suspicion because some members have been named as witting or semi-witting participants in foreign interference. They are taking direction and sometimes monetary resources from a foreign power to do that power's bidding and to influence the processes in this place. Canadians have a right to be concerned about that.

● (2015)

We came together in a rare moment at the end of June as the spring session was running out and passed Bill C-70. The Senate then passed it in short order and it found its way to the Governor General to receive royal assent. I was directly involved in that bill. I serve as the NDP's public safety critic and serve on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The bill gave our law enforcement and intelligence agencies the important legislative tools they need in order to do their jobs. In fact, I talked with many CSIS members, and they felt that with the previous law, they were operating under an analog law that was out of sorts with what is required in the digital world. It is not enough, though, because we find ourselves here today following October 14 and the RCMP's announcements.

I briefly want to go over what the NDP has been doing since then, because we are the party in this place demonstrating to Canadians a solid commitment to uncovering the truth on this issue.

We started off last week by spearheading a call for an emergency meeting of the public safety committee. I led the way in getting unanimous support for that, which is very rare. We had a meeting on Friday and were able to pass a motion to start a study on this. We are going to call upon the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Safety, national security experts and members of the RCMP to come before our committee to provide us with the answers that Canadians deserve.

That motion successfully passed, and I would like to thank members from all parties for passing it, as it was unanimous. I followed that motion up with another one, which basically called on the committee to report to the House the need for “all federal party leaders to apply for the appropriate security clearance level in the next 30 days in order to review classified information and take necessary actions to protect Canadians.” However, the Conservatives immediately started filibustering that motion, and I suspect they are going to continue tomorrow. They are the only party in this place whose leader has refused to get the necessary security clearance to protect Canadians, and that is absolutely shameful. I will get back to that near the end of my speech.

Today, our leader asked for unanimous consent to establish a special committee on Canada-India relations, and unfortunately the Liberal member for Winnipeg North rushed in to shout out no. At a time like this, when we need to focus our attention on the fraught relationship between our two countries, it is absolutely unbelievable that the Liberals would say no to the formation of a special committee to investigate this very serious issue.

That brings us to the emergency debate tonight, which was spearheaded by the leader of the NDP and has allowed members of Parliament to stand in this place and report back on the serious things that are happening in our communities. We will not waiver on this issue. We will continue to show the leadership necessary to get to the bottom of it. When the Liberals and the Conservatives are too busy throwing insults at each other, the country needs moral clarity. It needs to see leadership that stands up on behalf of all Canadians, and the NDP will continue to do that.

I have been listening to the Conservatives dodge, weave and provide the most flimsy excuses for their leader not getting security clearance. Let me note what some of the top national security experts in Canada have said. I am talking about former CSIS executives and former advisers to prime ministers, both Liberal and Conservative. They have described the Conservative leader's position as nonsense, as ridiculous and as nonsensical, as there is no reasonable justification.

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We are at a point where the Leader of the Opposition's continued refusal to get security clearance is raising far more questions than necessary at this time. This is a time when need to present a united front. We need to show our foreign adversaries that in this place, we may have our partisan differences, but when they mess with our internal affairs, we stand united, we are unshakable and we are unbreakable. It is absolutely shameful that the Conservative leader, who aspires to be prime minister, continues to refuse to get his security clearance. He is putting the partisan interests of his party over the interests of the country. He needs to be held to account. It is time for him to step up to the plate and get the security clearance that is necessary so we can tackle this issue with the united front it deserves.

• (2020)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is hearing the same thing I am hearing on the ground: Why is the leader of the Conservative Party, the leader of the official opposition, not getting his security clearance so he can know how agents of the Indian government were involved in criminal activities in Canada and the danger it is to our sovereignty? This is the question people are asking me. In fact, they are sending the clear message, as the member said, that we all have to be united on this front. They are sending the message that the Conservative leader stands with India instead of Canadian Citizens. I would like the hon. member's view on that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, it is a good question. It is precisely the type of question this is raising. I certainly hope for this country's sake that the Conservatives change their direction.

The Conservatives keep talking about this being a gag order. It is not. The most important thing they are skipping over is that it would allow their leader to take action. Leaders of political parties get to assign members of their caucus to various committees and various parliamentary roles, but they also get to sign their nomination papers to run under the party banner in the next election. Even if the leader cannot speak publicly about it, he can take the actions necessary in his caucus to make sure that any potential compromised member is not running as a Conservative MP in the next election and is not sitting in the House of Commons.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for how he laid out his wonderful speech and for the work he is doing on the public safety committee to ensure that Canadians get the answers they need.

Earlier today, our leader, the member for Burnaby South, put forward an excellent motion asking for an additional committee to be set up for Canada-India relations. Unfortunately, we saw the Liberal government vote that down. I am so confused. The Liberals tonight seem to be speaking about how important this issue is, yet they voted that motion down. Could the member talk about what he thinks the reasoning is for that?

• (2025)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. Just to repeat what my colleague said, it was the Liberal Party that said no to the formation of a special committee on Canada-India relations. Imagine that. At this time, following the RCMP revelations, the governing party, for whatever reason, has decided to say no to a special committee to look at this. We would be happy to

look into it at the public safety committee, and we are, but the moment we find ourselves in demands further action.

I would say to Canadians that they should call their Liberal MPs and demand answers as to why they are on the wrong side of history on this particular question.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, has the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who sits on the public safety committee, seen anything as egregious as the foreign interference by India, which has gone into murder, extortion, harassment and assault, in any of the other cases of foreign interference alleged against Canada, like from China, Russia and Iran? Has this been the most egregious case or have there been others? I would like him to answer that and perhaps enlighten this House on it.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I do not want to say whose experiences are worse than others, but I can say that certainly during the testimony on Bill C-70, we did hear from Canada's Tibetan community. Witnesses certainly relayed the transnational repression that the community is feeling from the People's Republic of China and the fact that family members who are still in mainland China regularly receive threats. The family members here in Canada are told to stay in line and to not misbehave, because their family is vulnerable in China.

Whatever nationality is being affected by whatever country, we need to stand united and call out foreign interference, especially the criminal kind, for what it is. This is a moment that demands all members of Parliament to stand firm and united, and to say to our foreign adversaries that we see them, that they are on notice and that we will no longer put up with this.

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to let the House know that I will be sharing my time with the member for Willowdale.

Last week, the RCMP independently and publicly released extremely disturbing and serious conclusions about the involvement of the agents of the Indian government and serious criminal activity taking place in Canada, including coercion, extortion, interference in democratic processes, spying, arson and homicides. In fact there are links to Indian diplomats collecting information about Canadians and passing it along to organized crime groups that have directly targeted the members of the Sikh and South Asian communities.

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Let us be very clear. These acts are a grave violation of Canadian sovereignty, and we will never tolerate any form of foreign interference in Canadian society. As Canadians know, since the allegations that the Government of India was directly involved in the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Canadian diplomats and law enforcement agencies made repeated attempts to work with the Government of India, but each time it failed to cooperate.

After almost a year of inaction, obstruction and delays from the Government of India, earlier this month our security agencies presented Indian officials with clear and conclusive evidence that six Indian officials were involved in serious criminal activity linked to extortion, spying, arson and homicides of Canadian citizens.

Still, despite these very serious allegations, the Indian government has refused to co-operate in the investigation. Therefore our government took the necessary steps to expel six Indian diplomats from Canada. In the interest of maintaining public safety and protecting Canadians, the RCMP independently made the decision to disclose this information to Canadians in an effort to disable and disrupt the violent criminal activities taking place in our communities.

Let us be clear. We will always stand up for a Canadian's right to feel safe and secure in their community. We will never tolerate attempts from any foreign government to intimidate or harass Canadians. Right now, as we speak, our police agencies and law enforcement agencies are working around the clock to disrupt and disable the transnational criminal activity by the Indian government and to ensure that everyone who is responsible for this grave violation of our sovereignty is held accountable.

The RCMP has been working alongside police agencies across the country, including in my own community of Brampton with the Peel Regional Police, in Toronto, in Surrey and in Edmonton, to leave no stone unturned in its investigation. I want to take a moment to thank the RCMP for its tremendous leadership, for the work of our men and women in uniform and for their collaboration at every step.

At the same time, our security agencies are also working with our allies in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, which have come to support us in our investigation. They have joined us in urging the Indian government to co-operate in the investigation.

Canada is a country that is rooted in the rule of law. We will never back down when it comes to protecting the rights of Canadians. The right of an individual to express their opinion and the right to peacefully protest are fundamental aspects of our democracy, aspects that all democratic nations should be working to protect.

● (2030)

I know that the events of the past week have left many members of the South Asian community, particularly the Sikh Canadian community, including my own in Brampton West, feeling anxious, upset and even scared. I want to take an opportunity to speak directly to the members of the Sikh community. As a proud Sikh myself, I want all Sikh Canadians to know that we see them, we hear them and we stand with them. They can know that their federal Liberal

government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister and of our colleagues who are here with me, is there every step of the way to ensure accountability for those responsible, to protect Canadians and to defend Canadian sovereignty.

I have also heard a lot of concerns from members of my community about the impact they think the issue is having on our relationship with India. Let us start by first acknowledging the fact that no one wanted to be in this situation. Canada and India have deep historical and cultural ties that I see every single day in my own community. Our families are connected and our cultures are connected, and we want this to be resolved. That is why we have been trying to work with the Indian government through our security agencies, through our diplomats and through our law enforcement agencies in order to find some way to resolve the issue, to protect Canadians and to ensure that there will be accountability and consequences.

However, unfortunately the Government of India did not choose to work with us. Simply put, we find ourselves in this situation because time and time again the Government of India refused to cooperate. Right now the safety and security of Canadians is our top priority. We will continue to do everything in our power to keep Canadians safe, and if anyone in the community has any information that could help an investigation, or if anyone is feeling unsafe, they should get in touch with their local law enforcement service.

During these uncertain times, we know it is not always easy to know what is true and what is false, particularly in online spaces. We know that this is especially difficult due to the misinformation and disinformation campaigns from India targeting the South Asian community, as has been presented by the Justice Hogue report on foreign interference, but we must be firm in recognizing and rejecting false rhetoric to stop it from entering our media and our community spaces. That is why it is so critical that we stay grounded in the facts and listen to our law enforcement and national security agencies as we seek the truth together.

Over the coming months, there will be full investigations and trials that will come before the courts. I want all Canadians to know that there will be justice and accountability for those people who are guilty, through our independent judicial system. However, right now as we navigate these challenging times and the feeling of anxiety, we know that our community is resilient, that our community is strong and that our community will get through this together.

Let me also take a moment to remind the Government of India that we will not tolerate any form of intimidation, harassment or harmful targeting of communities in Canada. This is a time for unity. Right now we as Canadians, regardless of political stripe, faith, race or religion, must unite and be steadfast in our values as Canadians: our values of freedom, of acceptance and of democracy, and above all our fundamental belief in the rule of law.

However, I have to say it is disappointing to see that in such a critical time for our country and for Canadians, the leader of the Conservative opposition has repeatedly refused to step up and protect Canadians by getting his security clearance. Canadians expect their leaders to be informed and to take action when it comes to things as important as national security and sovereignty, yet he is the only party leader in this place who has refused to get his security clearance in order to know the facts and to protect our country.

Let us be very clear that foreign interference costs lives. The safety and security of Canadians and our democracy are at stake here. This is not a political matter. It is a matter of national security, and it is absolutely shameful to see the leader of the Conservative opposition continue to put his own political interests above our national security and the safety and well-being of Canadians.

However, unlike the Conservatives, on this side of the House we are listening to our national security experts and are doing everything in our power to keep Canadians safe. We will continue to stand up for national security for the protection of Canadians and our democracy.

• (2035)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I sit on the Standing Committee for National Defence. One of the things we consistently hear about as a massive part of foreign interference is disinformation. I truly believe and I am quite saddened to see that a lot of the disinformation that exists in this country is coming from those foreign entities but that is also coming from certain political parties, specifically the Conservative Party.

Can the member maybe talk about what the Conservatives are trying to gain from the disinformation campaign, all of the campaigns that they are running, and how that links to what we are seeing from foreign governments like the Indian government?

Hon. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, I think we have seen time and time again that misinformation and disinformation is a real issue, particularly in online spaces. The Justice Hogue report particularly, when it comes to foreign inquiry, has pointed out how the Indian government and the propaganda that comes from the Indian side actually lead to misinformation and disinformation campaigns in our own communities. It is not just online. People start believing the campaigns. In fact sometimes I get questions from ethnic media about the things that we would assume are coming from the Indian government.

I think it is really important that we, as Canadians, first and foremost remember that we need to make sure we are listening to the facts and evidence and are guided by the rule of law and by the evidence that is provided by our intelligence and by our law enforcement agencies. That is really important. I also think it is really important that we, as leaders in this country, do everything possible to make sure we are protecting Canadians. That is exactly what we have been doing on this side of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have asked my Liberal colleagues a question a few times. They have yet to respond.

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I just listened to the minister's speech. She was very passionate and emphatic. I could tell she really believed in what she was saying. Someone on the Liberal side will have to explain to me, then, why it took so long.

A motion was adopted here in the House of Commons in November 2020 to establish a foreign agent registry. The Liberals who are here tonight speaking so passionately took three years to begin public consultations to come up with Bill C-70, which finally passed in 2024.

My question is simple. If the government takes its responsibilities seriously, why did it wait three years to begin consultations and take four years to come up with a bill, since the motion dates back to November 18, 2020?

• (2040)

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, I will remind my hon. colleague that no other governments have taken the issue of foreign interference as seriously as the Liberal Government of Canada.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, I know that my hon. colleague from the Conservative Party is laughing. It is shameful that he sits here and pretends to care about national security, but his own party's leader will not get security clearance to get to the bottom of this. I find it absolutely shameful, as a member of the Sikh community, that the member sits here as a member of the Conservative Party, pretends to care about national security and laughs and jokes around this, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give time for at least one more question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has the floor.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member in her speech noted how the Indian government has refused to cooperate. In the security briefing I received, I was very struck by what were described as plan A, plan B and plan C, as senior RCMP officers and senior Canadian diplomats attempted to show the Indian government the evidence.

I wonder whether all members of this place have already heard about plan A in Delhi, plan B in Washington, D.C., and plan C in Singapore, and whether the hon. minister wants to comment on the efforts of the Indian government to avoid looking at evidence.

Hon. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for being a party leader who also took the top security clearance to be able to get to the bottom of what is happening in our country, unlike the Conservative leader.

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Ever since the issue came to light, our government has been trying to work with the Government of India. We have been trying to collaborate with it and show it the evidence. We have shown it irrefutable evidence, but what we have seen every step of the way is that it has absolutely refused to co-operate. That is unacceptable, which is why the foreign minister made the decision to expel the six diplomats who allegedly have been involved with spying on Canadians and then using the information to target members of the Sikh community.

I want to thank our law enforcement agencies and security agencies for the tremendous work they have been doing to protect our communities.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to begin by thanking all fellow parliamentarians for facilitating and participating in tonight's important emergency debate.

The activities of the Indian government, as detailed last week by the RCMP, are shocking and should represent an affront to all Canadians, irrespective of their political views. This is a time for us all to be steadfast in our pursuit of the truth. Public safety and the integrity of our institutions is any Canadian government's most fundamental and greatest responsibility. We must each support all efforts to protect the rule of law, both at home and abroad.

I wish to commend the dedicated work of the RCMP and our security and law enforcement agencies as they continue to methodically pursue their ongoing investigation to keep our country and all Canadians safe. The actions detailed by the RCMP threaten the fundamental freedoms of Canadians. Not only is their security at stake, but their cherished right to the freedom of expressing their views without fear of violence or reprisal is threatened.

The allegations suggest that agents working on behalf of the Government of India have threatened our public safety. Such activity appears to have been conducted with the specific aim of creating a particularly threatening environment for Canadians of South Asian heritage and were connected to the revelations last year that the Indian government may have been implicated in the murder of the late Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a pattern of similar illegal tactics being used against diaspora communities across the western world. Just four days ago, the American Department of Justice indicted Vikash Yadav, a former Indian intelligence officer tied to a murder plot against a Sikh activist in New York City. Activists in the United Kingdom have also expressed fear of retaliation and violence from the Indian government, making it clear that such threats are not solely limited to Canada.

I want to take this moment to commend our allies for their support in the last few difficult days. The United States and the United Kingdom have publicly and openly called on the Government of India to fully co-operate with our investigation and have expressed their unconditional confidence in our judicial system and our staunch adherence to the rule of law. Now it is more important than ever that the democratic countries of the international community come together to close ranks given the common perils that confront us all.

Some may say that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, yet it is clear that the RCMP and the government have diligently investigated these claims following a thorough and methodological investigation. Last year, a credible link emerged between the operations of the Indian high commission and the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

We have repeatedly requested co-operation from the Indian government. At every step in this process, Canada has been open about its investigation and has shared the RCMP's evidence with Indian officials. However, the Indian government has decided to not co-operate. It is absolutely integral that we take steps to signal to India and the world that such actions are completely unacceptable and that our procedures are not open to negotiation or to be adhered to à la carte. Rather, we will pursue any challenge to our national security forthrightly and with full integrity.

• (2045)

Fundamentally, at our core, Canada as a nation has always demonstrated a commitment to the rule of law. We do not investigate, indict and prosecute without clear evidence warranting the attention of our law enforcement agencies and in strict pursuance of our judicial system. Any entity, whether or not it involves the backing of any state, cannot engage in malign actions without bringing the full attention and weight of our government to bear against it.

As a member of Parliament, I am committed to ensuring the safety and security of all Canadians. It is clear that the Sikh community in Canada, which numbers approximately 770,000, deserves our full protection and support now more than ever before. Despite our efforts, it is disheartening to see the Indian government's unacceptable response. Rather than engage with our investigation and help or assist us in uncovering the truth, the Indian government has systematically shrugged off any attempt at co-operation. Ultimately, this is a sad development. For over 75 years, our two countries have built deep, historical, cultural and economic links. Our relationship has always been underpinned by mutual respect and co-operation. By working together, our two respective countries have achieved great things for Canada and India. It is highly unfortunate and regrettable to see our mutual relationship threatened by the Indian government's obfuscation.

In conclusion, let me affirm that our commitment to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law are sacrosanct. They do not admit of any exception. We are Canadians, and we pursue the law without fear or favour. We must stand firm in ensuring that no organization or country is able to engage in the repression and intimidation of Canadians. While we will continue to dialogue with India, we should draw upon our allies to stress the importance of co-operation in addressing these very serious allegations. All parties in the House must come together to support our government's efforts to fully uphold the safety of all our citizens by jealously respecting international norms, due process and the rule of law. A failure to stand together with respect to the allegations regarding the Indian government would send every country in the world with malign intent the signal that we are not resolute in protecting the rights of all Canadians.

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I thank all members for their attention to this critical matter. Let us stand united in our pursuit of justice and the protection of our citizens and ensure that ties between Canada and India are based on mutual respect and accountability.

● (2050)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding in London—Fanshawe, there is such an incredible and vibrant Sikh community. Its members, for the last year or more, have been struggling with this fear and a shadow that hangs over them. It has been quite a lot. I am so grateful that we are now having this debate. It is long overdue, but I am certainly happy to have it.

New Democrats have been asking about the protection of Canadians and wanting to ban the extremist RSS group. I would like to ask the member for his opinion about that.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, regarding the hon. member for London—Fanshawe's first point, allow me to say that we are truly blessed as a country to have dynamic Sikh communities from coast to coast to coast, so that is something that all our ridings have the good fortune of sharing with London—Fanshawe.

With respect to the member's follow-up question, she has raised a very critical issue, an issue that does require that we pay closer attention. It is something that our government should look into very closely because it is our obligation to ensure that every Sikh person in this country has full confidence in our legal system and knows they will be protected from any threats.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think I will be lucky. I think this is the fifth time that I am asking a member of the Liberal Party this question. What is more, I get along fairly well with my colleague who just gave an excellent speech. We have the good fortune of being able to serve together on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and we work really well together. It is the only subcommittee that operates by consensus and where no voting takes place. Perhaps it would do the House some good to look at how this subcommittee operates.

I will ask him the question because I know that he will answer me. Can he explain to me why, despite the fact that a motion was adopted in the House on November 18, 2020, calling on the government to create a foreign agent registry, the government waited until March 2023 before beginning the public consultations that led to the drafting of Bill C-70, which was passed in 2024? Can my colleague tell me why the government took three years to begin consultations after the motion was adopted in November 2020?

[*English*]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, allow me to thank my hon. colleague for all the inspiring work he does in committee. It has truly been an honour to work collaboratively with him on numerous issues concerning human rights and upholding legal principles around the world.

On this issue of the foreign registry, what I can say is that I have always been a proud proponent of the foreign registry. That is

something I have always associated myself with. As I said, we have to confirm for all Canadians that we are being vigilant and that we are doing everything in our power to make sure that our institutions are up to the task of serving Canadians.

As to how and why it took so long, I cannot speak to the specifics of that issue. I think the hon. member will agree that what our government has produced is thorough, has been thought through and is very systematic. That is something that we can all welcome, and it is something we should all take comfort in.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today during this very important emergency debate to lend my thoughts and provide some feedback from the Sikh community.

The very serious revelations by the RCMP last Monday should be taken with the utmost seriousness. The RCMP has alleged that Indian diplomats and consular officials based in Canada were participating in foreign interference in Canada. To most Canadians, this might come as a shock that this could be happening in Canada. This is something the Sikh community has known about and was vindicated by what the RCMP alleged just last week. The community has been talking about this over the last 40 years. This is very close to the heart of the Sikh community.

As was mentioned by the deputy leader, the MP for Edmonton Mill Woods, there is a big difference in what has happened over those 40 years. There was a time when people's Indian visas would get cancelled. The difference now is that people's lives are being taken, coercion is taking place and threats of violence and extortion are happening.

Just to lay out the seriousness of the allegations, I want to put on the record the evidence that has been brought forward:

The RCMP has obtained evidence that demonstrates four very serious issues:

Violent extremism impacting both countries [India and Canada];

Links tying agents of the Government of India (GOI) to homicides and violent acts;

The use of organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian Community in Canada; and

Interference into democratic processes.

These are, by far, some very serious allegations that should not be taken lightly at all for any Canadians.

Canadians should feel safe in Canada, full stop. Their families should feel safe and our communities should feel safe. Canadians should be safe from extortion, murder and threats of violence, but after nine years of the Liberal government, Canadians do not feel safe anymore. Canada has become a safe haven and a playground for foreign interference under the Liberal-NDP government after nine years.

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Just last year, a Canadian was killed on Canadian soil and the RCMP alleged that was done by a foreign government. In that case, it was by India. It is a very difficult time in Canada right now. Many do not feel safe. Many do not feel this is Canada anymore. Whether people were born here and grew up here or immigrated here, like my family and millions of others, the one common thing heard across the country is that Canada is not Canada anymore. Many people left their countries because it was unsafe, only to come to Canada and now feel that Canadians are not safe on Canadian soil anymore. I spoke about the Sikh community advocating for this. As I said, it is a stark difference in the change that has taken place in Canada for many diaspora communities.

● (2055)

We must realize one thing, which is that a criminal in Canada is a criminal and a Canadian is a Canadian. This is not a religious or a cultural fight. This is for the safety and sovereignty of Canadians. The security of Canadians is at risk after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government. As I have said many times, people just do not feel safe here anymore. There is no safety for their children. Extortions are up. Violent crime is up. All of these things have been happening because of soft-on-crime policies. That is the reality of living in Canada today. That is why so many people do not feel safe here anymore.

Last year, the U.S. government foiled an assassination plot. It went from allegations to an arrest within one week. By contrast, here in Canada, the Prime Minister made allegations and then it just went quiet. Canadians felt more unsafe after they heard that news because they did not see action being taken. That is the problem. There has been no action taken by the government about some of the serious crimes taking place in this country. In fact, it has become a playground for these types of activities to take place because it does not seem like there is serious leadership in this country anymore after nine years of the Prime Minister. Communities at large started feeling unsafe at that point. They felt like there was no law to protect them anymore and that they had to fend for their own communities. That is the reality after nine years. That is how diaspora communities are feeling today.

Canada is at a very critical point right now in stopping foreign interference. This should be a wake-up call to the Liberal government that is soft on crime. Canadians need to feel safe in Canada from threats of violence, coercion and extortion by foreign actors. Canadians deserve to be protected on Canadian soil.

As our leader had mentioned, the news and allegations that were released last week regarding India's interference in Canada are extremely concerning and must be taken very seriously. We are in an environment where the government has divided Canadians and pitted Canadians against each other. Canada is supposed to be a country with freedom of expression including religious and political views. What this foreign interference has uncovered is that the government is incompetent and unable to protect Canadians from threats.

Conservatives expect a full criminal prosecution of anyone who has threatened, murdered or otherwise harmed Canadians. My Conservative colleagues and I have the goal of getting answers for

Canadians and to keep Canadians safe and stop Canada from being a playground for foreign interference.

I will end by quoting our leader from a letter he recently wrote, stating "Any foreign interference from any country, including India, is unacceptable and must be stopped".

● (2100)

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite said that the leader of the Conservative Party, in relation to these particular, very serious allegations by the RCMP, said the Prime Minister is pitting Canadians against Canadians.

I would like to know which Canadians have been pitted against which other Canadians, with regard to homicides and transnational aggression against Sikh Canadians here in Canada.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, it is well known what the Prime Minister does. He pits Canadians against each other to distract and divide away from his poor failed record. In this case, it is his poor record on foreign interference. He was recently at the foreign interference inquiry where he went and distracted, to pit Canadians against each other once again. He made all sorts of misleading statements in there.

That is what I am talking about. He did that on purpose, just to distract away from his failed miserable record that has left Canadians feeling more unsafe than ever before.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member highlighted the need to keep Canadians safe from foreign interference. There is confidential information that would allow the leader of his party to ensure that people in his party as well as other Canadians are more safe and, yet, the leader of the Conservative Party refuses to get the security clearance necessary to see that information. This is a case of wilful blindness when the lives of Canadians are on the line.

I would like the member to explain to Canadians who are wondering why every other political leader of every party in this place has received the necessary clearance to see those documents and his leader refuses to.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, it is clear the NDP once again wants to prop up the Liberals in gagging the Conservative leader. They want our leader to take a confidential briefing that would have to remain confidential. Let me be crystal clear on this point so it gets through their heads. According to the CSIS Act, the Prime Minister can, in this case, take 10 steps this way, walk over to the Conservative leader and release the names to the leader today. The leader does not need to be gagged and put under an order so he is not able to do anything with information, like the rest of these leaders. Release the names.

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• (2105)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, to my hon. friend from Calgary Forest Lawn, it is very important to not only get a security briefing but to understand the nature of the obligations of Canada, our intelligence gathering and security experts and the relationship they must have with our Five Eyes partners. As much I believe he sincerely thinks releasing names would be an easy thing to do, to do so might jeopardize what are referred to as intelligence assets. They are human beings, but as CSIS has explained to me, they have been referred to by CSIS as intelligence assets, whose lives could be at risk if we were to be reckless.

I want to put to the hon. member that there was a more dangerous time in 1985: the biggest single terrorist attack on Canadian soil, with the Air India bombing. I would no more decide to politicize that and say that somehow the Prime Minister of the day, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, was responsible for that. I think we know, from the Air India inquiry, there were systemic problems. The RCMP had bits of information and CSIS had bits of information. They did not work together well.

It is critical that in a debate like this, on an emergency motion of threats to Canadians on Canadian soil from a foreign government, we stop trying to politicize it and blame one party or one party's leader, but work together to show foreign governments that we can work together. On that basis, I want the official opposition leader to get his security briefing.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, our leader did get a briefing. On October 14, the national security intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, the deputy minister of foreign affairs at Global Affairs Canada and the director of CSIS all gave him a briefing about the foreign interference that was happening from India.

The CSIS Act allows the government to offer information to any Canadian about specific risks of foreign interference without forcing them into sworn secrecy or controlling what they say. After receiving that briefing, they never once brought up anything, not even just to our party or anyone, of the false claims that the Prime Minister was supposedly making. This is nothing but an effort to try to gag the Conservative leader. This is such a serious issue of foreign interference, and as we can see, the Greens, the Liberals and the NDP are all playing politics.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to continue on the same line of questioning. I have a statement here from Richard Fadden, who served as the former CSIS director, who said, "I really think the Leader of the Opposition should accept a security clearance so that he can be briefed in detail. All of these other politicians seem to be able to function and fulfill their duties as members of the opposition while still having some measure of briefing."

At this point in time, and this is the most important thing, the last thing we need to send to India is a message that we are not united on this point, because it will take advantage of that point and use it in India, and it has. We have seen a former army official who is serving as a state media commentator in India now who said that India should spend \$100 million to take down the Prime Minister of

Canada. Why is that happening now? We are not united on this, and the member is talking about not being political.

• (2110)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, the only thing that we are not united on is wanting our Conservative leader to be gagged after being sworn in.

In fact, it is the Prime Minister's chief of staff who admitted that is exactly what happens. According to the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, this would prevent a recipient from using the information in any manner. She said:

Even where that is not the case, briefing political parties on sensitive intelligence regarding an MP could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position, because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process.

It is not just taking our word for it; it is the Prime Minister's own chief of staff who admits it is a gag order. That is something that we do not want to do.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to ask my hon. colleague a question.

We are dealing with the very serious issue here of the RCMP saying that agents of the Indian government have been involved in murders and organized crime in Canada, and serious violence towards Canadians. The Liberal government and its Prime Minister have been in government now for nine years. Foreign interference from a number of countries, including India, has increased during that time. Violence in this country has increased during that time.

There are serious gaps that are causing Canadians to be less safe in this country, yet, when we hear from the NDP and the Liberals, all they can talk about is the opposition leader. Why is that?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I want to thank our deputy leader for his great work on trying to tackle extortion in Canada.

He is absolutely right: This is all politics for the Liberals, the NDP and, obviously, the Greens. That is all this is. This is such a serious issue that is taking place in Canada. They know it is happening, but it is more important for them to play politics.

I want to thank the member for Edmonton Mill Woods for bringing forward an extortion bill that, I must remind everyone, the Liberals and the NDP voted against. The member for Edmonton Mill Woods brought forward an extortion bill because of the feedback we heard from communities about not feeling safe after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government. He brought forward a private member's bill that would strengthen the laws when it comes to extortion, especially for organized crime, which we are seeing run rampant in the nine years of this incompetent Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers.

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When we brought forward that common-sense Conservative bill on extortion, they voted against it. It is more proof that everything is politics to them, and this is not about the safety, sovereignty or security of Canadians.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Mississauga—Malton.

On June 18, 2023, a community leader from my riding of Surrey—Newton, Mr. Hardeep Singh Nijjar, was brutally assassinated outside the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara, Surrey-Delta, which is also in my constituency. This shocking act has severely affected Sikh Canadians across the country.

At that time, many in the community alleged that this heinous crime was coordinated by the Government of India. In September 2023, the Prime Minister stood in this House and addressed members, stating that there is credible information linking the Government of India to Mr. Nijjar's assassination.

In recent years we have witnessed a disturbing rise in serious crimes targeting Sikh Canadians and others from the South Asian community, leaving many feeling anxious and unsafe. Last week the commissioner of the RCMP confirmed long-held suspicions within the community, that agents of the Government of India have engaged in activities that pose significant threats to our public safety, including threats of violence and murder.

The RCMP has obtained evidence that proves four very serious issues, including violent extremism; links tying agents from the Government of India to homicides and violent acts; the use of organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting Sikh Canadians and others from the South Asian community; and interference into our democratic processes.

Although the RCMP and national security officials have sought the collaboration of the Government of India on this matter, it has repeatedly refused to co-operate. The RCMP provided evidence to Indian officials indicating that six agents of the Government of India are persons of interest in these criminal activities, yet despite multiple requests, Indian officials have opted not to co-operate.

As a result, the Minister of Foreign Affairs took significant action by issuing deportation notices for those six individuals, ensuring they can no longer act as diplomats in Canada or re-enter our country.

The evidence presented by the RCMP cannot be overlooked. This is why our government has acted swiftly to try to disrupt criminal activities that continue to threaten public safety in Canada. Every Canadian deserves to feel safe. Canada is a nation built on diversity, peace and inclusion. We cannot and will not tolerate hate and violence. Our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians feel secure in their own country. This situation raises serious questions about international relations and highlights our core values of justice, democracy and the rule of law.

• (2115)

As Canadians, we take pride in our commitment to human rights and the principles of freedom and safety for all, regardless of background or beliefs. The credible allegations regarding the Govern-

ment of India's involvement in violence and intimidation against Canadians are troubling and require our full attention.

I have listened to the fears of many Canadians, including the residents of Surrey—Newton. When I go with my hon. colleague and dear friend from Surrey Centre to talk to the community, we get one message: Community members are anxious about their safety and well-being.

It is heartbreaking to hear their stories. I personally know of many individuals who have been targets of extortion in which money, services or information has been demanded through threats and intimidation. This not only impacts the victims but also tarnishes the image of Sikh communities in Canada.

Victims of extortion experience psychological trauma, financial loss and a sense of insecurity. The effects can lead to the breakdown of trust within diaspora communities, as fears may deter individuals from speaking out or seeking help. It is imperative that if anyone feels threatened, whether online or in person, they report the incidents to the police.

Since 1984, the democratic and human rights of Sikhs have been undermined globally, including right here in Canada. Many Sikhs have lost their lives in India and around the world. We must emphasize the importance of unity during these challenging times. It is crucial that we come together to condemn these heinous acts and uphold the principle of the rule of law. Our shared values demand that we address these threats head-on, supporting those affected and advocating for justice.

Canada is founded on justice, fairness and inclusivity. Let us uphold these values and ensure they prevail in the face of adversity.

In conclusion, let us stand united as a nation that values justice and human rights. We must support the ongoing investigations with integrity and transparency, ensuring that the truth prevails. Together we can reaffirm our commitment to a Canada that protects the rights and dignity of all citizens, fostering a society where everyone can live freely and without fear.

There is one other thing that bothers me, and I am hearing day in and day out from my constituents that every other leader in the House of Commons from every party, Bloc, NDP, Liberal and Green, all four of them, have taken their security clearance and looked at the evidence so they can come together, united, to work as a team and take action against the foreign government. There is only one leader, the leader of the Conservative Party, who is not taking that security clearance.

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● (2120)

The word out there is that if he takes that security clearance and looks at that evidence, then he certainly would have to stand with other leaders and defend Canada instead of being on the side of India. That is the message the leader of the Conservative Party, the leader of the official opposition, is sending, and some of the members of his caucus are defending him.

I feel ashamed, and in fact they should be feeling ashamed as well with respect to what the Sikh community is facing, as some of them belong to the Sikh community. I would request the Leader of the Opposition to take the oath for security clearance and come up with the support shown by every other leader to protect Canadians and their safety.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for some of the things that he outlined in that discourse.

One of the ways that we would be able to hold hearings and get more information for Canadians about foreign interference would be if we did have a Canada-India committee struck, similar to the Canada-China committee on which I sit at the moment. Why has the Liberal Party chosen not to support the formation of such a committee, a committee that could do that very important work that we know needs to happen to reassure Canadians that foreign interference is not affecting democracy in this country?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I want to be clear that I did not oppose this motion that came forward. The other thing is that we have full faith in our RCMP and the work that the RCMP is doing. We do not want that work to be jeopardized. I certainly can assure the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona that I will stand together for anything and everything to protect Canadians and their safety.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my dear friend and colleague from Surrey—Newton for all his hard work in bringing light to this issue. As we heard from the Prime Minister during his testimony, it is important for members across this House from the South Asian diaspora to bring these issues forward and raise them so that we can get to the bottom of many of these issues.

What else has the member heard on the ground in terms of the efforts that have been made by the RCMP to combat some of these threats. How has the community been reporting these incidents and how have they been met?

● (2125)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Steveston—Richmond East for his inspiration. He always inspires me to do good in the communities.

With respect to the community, in Surrey we go together as a team, the hon. member for Surrey Centre and I, and we go and talk to the Sikh community. In fact, the members of the community appreciate the leadership that our Prime Minister has shown. They also appreciate the work that the RCMP has done and continues to do. That is what I am hearing on the ground.

One other thing I am hearing on the ground is that people want the leader of the official opposition, the leader of the Conservative

Party, to take similar leadership and come together as a team player alongside the leaders of the other parties to protect Canadians and send a clear message to India and other nations that are intervening in our sovereignty and are playing with the lives of Canadians that we are united to protect Canadians and their safety.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the member for raising so many of these important issues. In Edmonton, we have seen examples of extortion being used as well, which is something many Edmontonians and many Canadians across the country are very worried about.

One of the issues that I have focused on as the foreign affairs critic for the NDP has been the way that the Arms Trade Treaty is being enforced. Right now, in this country, it is very difficult to know what arms being sent to different countries. There is not a lot of transparency. It is much less transparent than in many other countries, including in the United States. One of the things I wonder about is the arms transfers to India right now, as we do not know.

I know that the member is an expert, and I would like to get his perspective. Does he believe that Canada should still be sending arms to the Modi government, knowing that the Modi government has used genocidal language and that it has committed human rights abuses against its own people and against minority groups?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her question and for the work that she does on human rights issues, which is unparalleled, and I have to give her the credit.

When it comes to human rights, whether it is at home or around the globe, our government and our Prime Minister take human rights very seriously. We make sure that we do everything, including in the trade of firearms or weapons that we send to other countries, to make sure that we are not doing that with countries that do not protect human rights.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was a little over a year ago when I rose in this very chamber and called on all Canadians to unite. It was earlier that week when the Prime Minister stood in this House to tell all Canadians that our security agencies had been actively pursuing allegations of a link between agents of the Government of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen. Since that time, much has taken place. I wish now to speak to all Canadians once more.

Last week the RCMP announced that it had indeed found evidence that agents of the Government of India are actively involved in a network of criminal activity here in Canada, including homicide, extortion, organized crime and interference in our democratic process, a network of crime that could even mean the involvement of some of India's highest-ranking diplomats.

In the RCMP's own words, an "extraordinary situation" compelled the RCMP to speak about an ongoing investigation. Despite law enforcement action over the past year, harm has continued to emanate from agents of the Government of India, so much so that the RCMP reached a pivotal point at which it had to confront that government and inform the public here of its very serious findings.

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Let me be clear: The security of Canadians is our top priority. Our justice system will be relentless in holding accountable those persons who seek to harm any Canadian, regardless of their position or proximity to power, because the stakes could not be higher. It is clear that what occurred last year was not an isolated incident, and we continue to learn about the extent of the interference still. It is a culture of intimidation, endangering those in our communities. It is stunningly brazen interference in our democratic process, and in the worst of cases, it has manifested itself, as we have learned, in the deaths of fellow citizens.

The allegations levied against the Indian government, backed by evidence, demonstrate that we will not tolerate acts of violence. We will not tolerate efforts to retaliate against Canadians for simply exercising their constitutionally protected rights. These acts are a great example of the increased violent transnational repression that is targeting diaspora communities in Canada.

The core of the message that I seek to deliver today is the same that I delivered last September. It is our sovereignty, plain and simple, that is at stake, and defending it wholeheartedly requires all of us to set aside our differences.

Now, more than ever, is the time to stand by our law enforcement. I want to express my deep gratitude to those in the RCMP and across security agencies who have been working tirelessly to not only protect Canadians across this country but who have also been at the vanguard in the fight to defend Canadian sovereignty in doing so.

I want to be clear in the House that in this age, we condemn violence and terrorism as political tools. Canadian citizens, regardless of where they come from, must never be prevented from the free and peaceful expression of their opinions and concerns. It does not matter what those opinions and concerns are; that is freedom of expression, an idea so foundational to our democracy that it finds itself enshrined in our Constitution, not just as words on parchment but in the ideals we live by.

• (2130)

Any democracy can and must defend the rights of its people to gather, to speak and to protest, through peaceful means, within the laws of the land. That is the fundamental liberty of our people. I ask this of the chorus of cynics who stand ready to point fingers: If not this, then what?

In any other system, those in power would only repress those on the periphery. Those in the centre would keep those on the sidelines at the sidelines, as has happened for centuries. In the House, we must recognize the role we play as parliamentarians and as Canadians. Whether it is confronting difficult truths or challenging our long-held beliefs, defending our sovereignty deserves nothing less than our full commitment. It is unconscionable that any member of the House would willingly wear a blindfold rather than do right by Canadians. That is shameful. We, the citizens of this country, through our Constitution, have the right to hold whatever views we wish, to think what we want and to say what we think. Our fundamental liberties are the core tenets of our Canadian experience. They have guided us from the earliest days of our nation's founding, and they will guide us to brighter days ahead. I am sure of this.

A year ago, I called on all Canadians to unite, saying that, although our heritage could vary, our destiny would be common. I once again call on Canadians to close rank. Our democracy will only endure when we have set aside our differences in service of a greater purpose: to protect the sacred right to hold an opinion, to say what we want and to do it without reprisal. That is foundational to our highest creed, and we can only endure when this creed endures.

• (2135)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his heartfelt speech this evening. I have heard from members, from individuals across Canada, who have expressed the fear that they feel. They are worried about how to talk to their children and spouses about the violence they are threatened with. They feel that their community has been targeted and that they are at risk every single day. We have seen extortion happening across the country. Obviously, we have seen violence, including alleged murder.

Some of the members of the community, such as Canadians from coast to coast to coast who are part of the Sikh community, are experiencing such violence against them. They know that there is a leader of an official party in the House of Commons who will not get a security clearance. They know he is choosing to ignore the pain they are suffering and what they are going through. Could the member speak a little bit about how it must feel or how he would assume it would feel for those members of the community?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Madam Speaker, in fact, that is a conversation I have had with my own family, in terms of what this means. Many deep-seated fears were realized when, last year, the Prime Minister stood in this very House, not too far from where I am standing now, and declared that there is evidence to show that agents of the Government of India have done some very bad things in this country to repress Canadians. It is even more shameful that the leader of the Conservative Party refuses to get security clearance so that he can know the names of the individuals in his own party who are compromised and remove those people. He has full liberty to do so. That is exactly what I hope to see from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Mississauga—Malton for his passionate speech and concern for the community. Does he see the Indian state-led media taking advantage of the fact that we are not showing a united front here, not only in the House of Commons but from across the bench.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his work and advocacy on this file, as well as for the question he just posed.

Immediately after the Prime Minister stood in the House last year and again when he stood last week to indicate the news about the agents of the Government of India, we saw deflection and denial from Indian state media and, in fact, all Indian media. It is so coordinated. One cannot call it misinformation; it is disinformation. The fact is that they are denying and deflecting, and they are not treating credible allegations seriously.

I implore the Indian government and its officials to go over the evidence. India is also a “rule of law” country and has a legal system that is very similar to ours. I implore them to look at the evidence, and I implore the Indian media to paint a fair picture of it.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, my Liberal colleague has explained how agents of the Indian government have been taking part in organized crime in this country.

In the last nine years, under the Liberal government, the policies of the country have been changing. It is much softer on crime; it is easier to get bail. Violent crime has been increasing in Canada, and murders are up. Every type of crime statistic is up in Canada.

Does he believe this has made it any easier for foreign nations, such as India, to conduct organized crime and violent activities here in Canada?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Madam Speaker, my colleague is very quick to react to the past nine years, but I implore him to look at the years in which he was in government, when he was a minister. Then, there was a lack of investment in our police service and in our security agencies.

It is our Prime Minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (2140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I remind some hon. members that, while they were speaking, nobody was heckling.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Madam Speaker, when the member was a minister, there was a severe lack of funding for security agencies and for police agencies in this country.

It is our Prime Minister who set up NSIRA and NSICOP. He has stood in the House and declared that he was for Canada, for Canadians and for protecting their fundamental freedoms. That is our Prime Minister.

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, the news we heard last week from the RCMP was extremely concerning and must be taken seriously. I want to be very clear when it comes to this: Any foreign interference from any country, including India, is unacceptable and must be stopped.

Our government's first job is to ensure that Canadians stay safe and that their livelihoods are protected. No Canadian should feel unsafe living in our country or feel unsafe because they are getting foreign threats. We expect a full criminal prosecution of everyone who has threatened, murdered or otherwise harmed Canadian citizens.

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As a country, we need to ensure that we do every single thing possible and necessary to protect Canadians, our democracy and our sovereignty. However, over the years, under the Liberal-NDP government and with the current Prime Minister in charge, we have seen a failure to protect Canadians. We have seen the government and the Prime Minister fail to protect our democracy and our sovereignty.

Back in 2015, while working in the previous Conservative government, it would have been unheard of for foreign governments not only to threaten Canadians and their lives but also to go after them and take their lives. That never happened before, under our Conservative government. However, the Prime Minister has allowed foreign interference to run rampant in our communities and our country. He has dragged his feet and made things worse by bringing in soft-on-crime laws. We have seen the bills the Liberals brought in, such as Bill C-75 and Bill C-5; these catch-and-release bail policies are soft on criminals and hard on victims. These laws send a signal to criminals in other countries that we do not take this stuff seriously in our country. It sends a signal that organized crime can run freely in our country and that the criminals have more rights than Canadians. The Liberal policies fostered this environment. The Prime Minister's inaction made Canada a playground for foreign interference.

We heard some troubling news from the RCMP last week that foreign agents from India used organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian community in Canada, predominantly the Sikh community. We heard accusations of extortion and murder on Canadian soil, as well as the use of organized crime, intimidation and coercion.

Conservatives have been calling for action on foreign interference and clamping down on organized crime and transnational criminals for some time now. I have stood up in the House multiple times during question period to ask questions of the government on what its plan is to fight extortion. We got nothing from the government; it has been no action and all talk.

● (2145)

The Prime Minister did not want to act, and what that has meant for Canadians is the loss of safety in our communities. Under his leadership, homicides are up 28%. The member for Mississauga—Malton mentioned comparing the records of the two governments. I am talking about the Liberals' record. Violent crime is up 50%. Violent gun crime is up 116%. Can members guess how much extortion has gone up? That is the same crime that was mentioned by the RCMP last week. It has gone up about 360%. That is not a small number. Something had to have changed for that to happen.

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It is the Liberals' policies. It is Bill C-75, Bill C-5 and the Liberal government's approach to fighting organized crime. If tough laws were in place, it would send a signal to criminals that we are not going to tolerate this in our country. Not just folks in Canada but those across the world would get the idea that Canadians will fight against this kind of action.

I have heard directly from business owners and members in the South Asian community who have been victims of extortion. I have listened to the calls they received, which they shared with us. Those are scary calls. Imagine a business owner, a prominent member of a community or an activist who gets a call from someone threatening to shoot up their home, their business or their family. Listening to those calls gives a person a chill down their spine. The Liberals' policies have allowed this to happen.

We have learned from the RCMP that transnational gangs are being used by foreign agents from India, who are trying to cause fear in our communities and take the lives of Canadians. Many people are afraid to return home. They are afraid to carry on with their businesses and worried about carrying on with their lives.

Some have separated from their families, with some living in different parts of the country and some living in hotels. Many have had to hire security and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to keep their families safe. They come from a wide range of industries. Some are in the trucking business; some are in hospitality or are restaurant owners. We have heard of prominent Punjabi singers being targeted in B.C.

This is not just happening in one part of Canada. We have seen this right across our country, in B.C., in the GTA, in Winnipeg and in Edmonton. No one should feel unsafe in their communities. Canadians from all faiths, Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, should not feel unsafe living in our great country.

That is why our Conservative deputy leader brought forward a common-sense Conservative bill to take on extortion head-on. The bill would have made it harder for extortion to happen in Canada. It would have sent a signal to these international gangs that we mean business here in Canada. These are the same crimes the RCMP mentioned just last week. The bill would have established mandatory minimum penalties and stopped extortion from happening, yet the Liberal and NDP members voted against the bill, leaving more Canadians susceptible to foreign interference.

• (2150)

Earlier today, the member for Calgary Skyview, who brought forward the motion for this important debate, shared stories similar to the ones I have heard from families who have been separated from their loved ones because of extortion. Here is what I do not understand. When we travel across our country and meet groups, as we have had town halls and seen other groups host town halls, they are asking for concrete solutions. When our deputy leader put forward that solution, a tangible piece of legislation that would have helped prevent this crisis, the NDP and the Liberal Party voted against it.

They voted against tangible solutions to the problems, and I know members hear about it in their communities. We have held dozens of town halls in the South Asian community where we have

spoken to and heard concerns of those affected by extortion. They do not want symbolic gestures; they want real action. Our bill had real solutions. Those parties voted against it.

We have also seen the Liberals dragging their feet on this issue and not taking foreign interference seriously. The government was repeatedly warned about foreign interference within its own party, the Liberal Party, but refused to act. I wonder why. It is the Prime Minister and members of his government who repeatedly claim they just were not aware of foreign interference that was happening right under their noses, despite a paper trail of warnings from officials.

With Conservatives it is less talk and more action. Conservatives brought forward a foreign agent registry bill that, almost four years ago, was blocked by the Liberals and the NDP. The measures would have been useful as a tool to help keep our communities and the South Asian community safe. Despite multiple warnings, however, the Liberals continue to claim ignorance. The record shows otherwise, including mysterious delays of 54 days that we saw on a CSIS surveillance warrant for a Liberal power broker.

It is happening under their noses, yet they are not taking action. They plead ignorance. The ministers say they do not know anything about this. The Prime Minister makes excuses. We saw even former staffers who gave absolutely no answers to the commission. We heard in the Hogue commission that this is not a new problem affecting Canada. This has been happening for years under the current government.

The red flags have gone up, lots of red flags, but again, there is no action from the government. It makes no sense. We have seen flag after flag, leaks in the media, yet no action from the government.

• (2155)

If we look at the U.S., which has seen a similar situation unfold, within weeks it was able to arrest those involved, move forward with indictments and hold them accountable. Our government has not been able to do that. It has not been able to stop these attacks on our sovereignty. It has not been able to save the lives of Canadians. This is a serious matter. Canadians' lives are at risk, and the Liberals are in charge of keeping Canadians safe; it is their job.

At every single juncture, we have the Prime Minister and members of the government, backed by their coalition partners, who put pension and party before country, not acting on the information they have had. It is beyond rich for the Prime Minister to grandstand, given his government's record of not taking foreign interference seriously. Even with all the benefits he has from the government and agencies, and all the information he has from our great security services, he failed to act.

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Conservatives are the only ones who have taken this foreign interference crisis seriously. The NDP members can laugh all they want, but they have been in bed with the government for nine years. If they cared so much about this, why did they not include it in the supply and confidence agreement? Why did they not make it a core pillar of their agreement? They do not care. They make it up on the fly.

Canadians deserve transparency. The Prime Minister must release the names of all members, from all the parties, who are collaborating with foreign entities, but he will not. The Prime Minister is doing what he always does. He is trying to distract us from the truth. He is trying to cover up a Liberal caucus revolt, which we are seeing. We saw four ministers recently announce they will not be running under his leadership again, because they continue to fail to make the lives of Canadians better. If the Prime Minister has evidence of challenges, he should bring it up to the public, because this is a public safety concern.

Conservatives are committed to protecting our democracy and our sovereignty from foreign interference. The Prime Minister must be held accountable for his government's failure to act, and we call on him to release all the names of MPs involved in foreign interference, to restore transparency and to defend the interests of all Canadians.

While some may try to divide our communities, try to stoke fear and hate, or spread disinformation to pit our communities against one another, it is important that we stand united as Canadians in protecting the integrity of our democracy. Our country depends on it.

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment and to ask a question of the member regarding extortion.

The member painted a very serious image of the extortion that is going on. In my community, in particular, I have had constituents come to me with videos of FaceTime calls from leaders of gangs sitting in prisons in India. How does that happen? How are people who are imprisoned in India contacting my constituents in order to extort them through local gang organizers in this country? There has to be foreign interference involved.

However, I have yet to hear from the member opposite as to why the Conservatives are not calling upon the Government of India and the diplomats who were here, who have been linked to these heinous crimes, spreading violence in our community, creating fear among Canadians, and targeting and murdering Canadians in Canada. The Conservatives stay silent. They are not calling for the diplomats to co-operate with Canadian investigating authorities, to give testimony so we can get to the bottom of who is doing this.

• (2200)

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. When the leader or members of our caucus have visited the GTA, including the member's own riding, we have heard horrific stories of folks being extorted. A 360% increase in extortion has happened under the Liberal government's watch.

The Liberals have been in charge for nine years. We never had this problem under our former Conservative government. The Lib-

erals have created the conditions for it. More importantly, we gave them an opportunity and a tangible solution, a great bill from our deputy leader that would have made the situation better for Canadians. What did they do? They voted against it. If they are going to cry crocodile tears about the issues when they are not putting forward tangible results, it means absolutely nothing. Shame on them.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to be honest; Canadians across the country are seeing that the leader of the official opposition has had the opportunity for 140 days to get his security clearance so he can get to the bottom of some of the information, and he refuses to do that. However, that is not the subject of the question I actually have for the member right now.

New Democrats for a long time have called on the government to ban entry for BJP officials from India who have called for race violence and genocidal violence against Muslims and other groups. Why will the Conservatives not call for those people to be banned from Canada? I wonder whether the member would like to do that right now.

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, I think that is a great question to ask the Liberal government, which the NDP has been in partnership with for the last nine years. The New Democrats could have spoken to the Liberals, but they failed to do that. They failed to raise this when the NDP was in a coalition with the government. It is ironic that the NDP members are talking about a security clearance when their own former NDP leader Thomas Mulcair has said that he would not have gotten a security clearance because it would gag the leader of the Conservative Party on the issues and holding the government to account.

The leader has been briefed. On October 14, he was briefed by the national security adviser to the Prime Minister. He received a confidential briefing on the matter, so the disinformation coming from both the NDP and the Liberals is quite concerning.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the misinformation coming from the other side of the aisle is unbelievable. The Conservatives talk about nothing having been done here, but there have been 22 arrests for extortion and eight for murder.

The member's colleague talked about the problem having gone on for 40 years. That is a sincere issue that we have to talk about. We even acted on it. Forty years ago, the Security of Information Act was changed, and it is now responsible for making sure we find out about these nefarious crimes.

Was it not the member opposite's leader and the former Conservative government that set a precedent by allowing Chinese police officers to set up shop here? Now we are again seeing that officials from other countries are setting up shop and acting nefariously.

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Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, like with everything else, Liberals want a pat on the back for their own failures; that is their normal behaviour. They talk about a crisis that they have created, and now they want a pat on their own back. How does that make any sense? They dragged their feet on a foreign interference registry. That was under the current government's watch. It would have been a tangible solution, once again. They voted against an extortion bill that was in Parliament. They want a pat on the back for just empty words. It is not going to happen.

Canadian lives are at risk. Chinese police stations have been running and have been terrorizing the Chinese community in the GTA under the Liberal government's watch.

• (2205)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing from the Liberals, over and over again, that they are angry, but the previous Conservative government spent less money with better results. Extortion was down, violent crime was down and auto thefts were down back then. They are angry that they are spending more money and hiring more people, yet all the numbers are up. Extortion is up more than 300% in this country and violent crime is up 34%.

The Liberals are bragging about their record, but they voted down a common-sense Conservative bill, Bill C-381, brought forward by our common-sense Conservative deputy leader, the member for Edmonton Mill Woods, and so did the NDP. Can the member please comment on how that makes any sense?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, I always say that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. We have seen what the Liberals have done in nine years, which is nothing. They have let this issue simmer and get to a point where Canadians are now losing their lives.

The member is right that the Liberals like to brag about their record, but it is a record of failure, and they will continue to distract however they can from the failed record of the government. I understand they are frustrated. It is tough having internal caucus problems that are spilling into the public, but we are here to fight for Canadians and not their party. I get that it is tough, but we need real, tangible solutions from the government, which we have not seen in the last nine years.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I asked a question of the member earlier tonight and did not get a response, so I will keep it very simple for him. Will the member commit to banning entry to BJP officials who have called for racist and genocidal violence against Muslims and other minorities in India, yes or no?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, any person who pushes hate or has a criminal background should not be allowed in our country. Unlike what the government has done by granting ISIS terrorists citizenship, the Conservatives will make sure that our immigration system has the integrity to protect Canadians and not allow criminals into the country.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, are the Conservatives serious about bail reform? A number of Conservatives have said this is because of bail reform. Do they think the Indian government is sitting back and saying that since Canada just changed its bail laws, it should try to infiltrate us

and do nefarious things here? That is what I am hearing from the Conservatives over and over.

The member talks about how serious this issue is. Has he had a conversation with his leader? His leader will not even talk about it. He will not even make a single social media post on it. He will not even get a security clearance so that he too can have all of the facts. Does the Conservative leader not care about this?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, this is the same grandstanding that we have seen from the Prime Minister, and now the Liberals have taken up acting classes themselves.

When we have soft-on-crime policies, not only are we signalling it domestically, but we are also sending a message to international gangs terrorizing our communities. We are letting them know that we are a playground for foreign interference. The government should be setting the tone, but has failed to do anything.

The Liberals can grandstand all they want, but the proof is in the pudding. Extortion is up 360% because of their failures.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

The constituents in my riding of Brampton East are very anxious. They are anxious about acts of violence targeting the Sikh and broader South Asian community, about foreign interference in our democratic processes, and about these being directly tied to agents of the Government of India, as the RCMP commissioner publicly and clearly stated last week.

The rule of law must be respected, and our citizens must be protected. We will not tolerate any form of harassment, intimidation or violence targeting Canadians. I know that all parliamentarians in this chamber would agree with that.

There is a lot of misinformation flying around, and I have had constituents reach out to me with questions, so please allow me to state some facts on the record for those watching at home. There were 22 individuals who were arrested and charged in relation to extortion and eight arrested and charged in relation to homicides. This is thanks to the hard work of the RCMP and law enforcement agencies across Canada.

Back in February 2024, the RCMP created a multidisciplinary team to coordinate and investigate public threats. Through very active investigations, it has come across very serious findings, and it felt the public needed to know, which led to the press conference it initiated last Monday. I want to ensure that words are not mixed up, so I would like to read what the RCMP commissioner very clearly stated on the record last week.

He stated:

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Investigations have revealed that Indian diplomats and consular officials based in Canada leveraged their official positions to engage in clandestine activities, such as collecting information for the Government of India, either directly or through their proxies; and other individuals who acted voluntarily or through coercion.

Evidence also shows that a wide variety of entities in Canada and abroad have been used by agents of the Government of India to collect information. Some of these individuals and businesses were coerced and threatened into working for the Government of India. The information collected for the Government of India is then used to target members of the South Asian community.

This evidence was presented directly to Government of India officials, urging their cooperation in stemming the violence and requesting our law enforcement agencies work together to address these issues.

I would like to note that the United States, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand have all urged the Government of India to co-operate with our law enforcement agencies. This is a very serious matter and we all need to stand together to show a united front against any form of foreign interference. There are people out there who want to divide communities, but as leaders here in the House, it is our job as parliamentarians to bring communities together. Four out of the five party leaders represented in this very chamber have either received their security clearance or are in the process of getting it. There is only one party leader who chooses to close his eyes and remain oblivious to foreign interference and continues to refuse to get a security clearance. That is the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Prime Minister stated, under oath I may add, “I have the names of a number of parliamentarians, former parliamentarians and/or candidates in the Conservative Party of Canada who are engaged, or at high risk of, or for whom there is clear intelligence around foreign interference”.

Is that what the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada is afraid to confront, Canadians being threatened, coerced with violence and even murdered? As a leader, would he not want to know about the risks that impact the safety and security of Canadians? Would he not want to know if someone in his party is engaged in or at risk of foreign interference? Would he not want to stand up for the protection of democracy? These are the important questions being asked by Canadians across the country with respect to the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. Having a top-level security clearance would allow him to receive classified briefings on foreign interference.

Of Conservative Party voters, 60% said that all leaders, including the Conservative leader, should get a security clearance. He is not even listening to his own party. What is he hiding? He needs to wake up, get his clearance and start taking foreign interference seriously.

● (2210)

I would like to thank the Minister of Public Safety for his commitment to disrupt and counter foreign interference risks. This past June, Bill C-70 received royal assent, bringing a significant update to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, among several other legislative amendments. These amendments enhance Canada's collective resilience and uphold these values that we know are pivotal to maintaining a healthy and strong democracy.

With accountability comes transparency. That is why our government, through the public safety ministry, has established a new

Canada foreign influence transparency registry. This registry imposes an obligation on individuals and entities to register their arrangements with any foreign principal and disclose any foreign influence activities in relation to governmental or political processes in Canada. Activities such as communication with a public office holder, communication or dissemination of information to the public by any means, as well as the disbursement of money or items, including providing a service or use of a facility, would result in a registration requirement.

Not reporting can lead to penalties and fines of up to \$5 million and up to five years in prison. Although this is a new policy for Canada, other allied countries, such as the United States and Australia, already have foreign registries in place that require those acting on behalf of a foreign state to register their activities. The United Kingdom has also announced its plans to introduce a similar process.

Our government knows that now is not the time to sit back on our heels and wait for things to happen. Now is the time to be proactive in our efforts to ensure that policies and mechanisms we have in place protect Canadians and our institutions. With these measures in place, our government is better able to hold those in positions of influence to account by ensuring that they report on matters of importance regarding foreign principals. As the age-old saying goes, knowledge is power, which is why the proper procedures and policies must be in place so that Canadians are aware and informed.

I, like many of my hon. colleagues, have received a heightened number of emails, calls and letters from constituents who are scared and who are worried about their families and friends. Attending prayer, gathering with loved ones or attending community events should not be coupled with worrying about one's safety or the fear of being a target. Canadians have the right to express their religious beliefs, thoughts and ideas freely, without fear of persecution, without inciting any type of violence or hate.

I hope that what I have spoken to today can provide my constituents and all Canadians with reassurance that our government will always uphold their rights and freedoms and impose serious consequences on anyone who decides to infringe upon them.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Peel Regional Police and all of the law enforcement agencies across our country who have been vital in keeping our communities safe. Their bravery, dedication and unwavering response to answer the call of duty should be recognized and commended.

No matter what our political stripes are, I know that all members of the House can agree upon condemning any acts of foreign interference. In the essence of unity, I know that we will continue to stand together in the pursuit of justice. As the RCMP's investigation continues, maintaining a united front is paramount, and any act that impedes the pursuit of justice will not be tolerated.

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I close today by saying that whether we are Buddhist, Catholic, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or agnostic, at the end of the day, we are all Canadians. As Canadians, regardless of our political leanings, we need to continue to stand together against foreign interference that targets our communities, that wants to divide our communities, that wants to instill fear in our communities. We are united as Canadians. Let us continue looking out for each other and lean on each other, because that is what Canadians do.

• (2215)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech this evening was very well done. It brought up a lot of interesting and important points. Obviously, like him, I am utterly disgusted that the Leader of the Opposition will not get his security clearance. That is obviously a challenge for us.

He outlined so many risks that we see right now that are happening, and to me there seems to be a very urgent need for a committee to be able to look at this. This is a very complex issue. There are many parts of Canada's relationship with India that I think need to be examined, yet the Liberal Party stopped the unanimous consent motion brought forward by the leader of the NDP calling for the creation of such a committee.

I am wondering what justification he has for the Liberal Party to deny Canadians that right.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I did not oppose that motion.

I think it is important to note that the public safety committee does have a study ongoing now, with six meetings. I know that the Minister of Public Safety and, I believe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be appearing at that committee.

We also have very important work going on through the foreign interference inquiry, through the Hogue commission. I know that we are all looking forward to seeing the report that comes out from that.

• (2220)

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I both represent the Peel region, a region that has a large South Asian diaspora. He and I have had conversations with residents who are rightly concerned based on the allegations put forward by the RCMP. What conversations has he had with residents, and how does he reassure residents that the RCMP has the backs of Canadians?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for asking a very important question on local community safety. He is probably getting the same calls I am getting from constituents who are worried about extortion calls to their neighbours and worried about violence and threats against their neighbours.

Working with the RCMP, Peel police have taken a very active stance. As I said, close to 22 people were arrested and charged for extortion and close to eight people were arrested and charged for homicide. Many of these arrests have been made in Peel thanks to the hard work of Peel police. I want to take a moment to thank the officers involved in this very important matter for keeping our communities safe.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I personally find it extremely alarming that the Leader of the Opposition did not issue a statement on the incredible RCMP revelation that happened last week.

As others have said, I also find it absolutely perplexing that the Leader of the Opposition would not get a security clearance so he could at least understand and absorb the information. The Conservatives get up repeatedly, at least two or three times today, to say "release the names", but their leader has access to all these names. All he would need to do is get a security clearance and he would have the names.

I am wondering if the member is as equally confused about all of this as I am. One, the Leader of the Opposition will not make a single statement on this, at least not publicly, and two, he seems to hide at every single opportunity instead of getting a security clearance so he can have access to the information that we would naturally assume anybody aspiring to be prime minister would want.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question that Canadians are asking at this important time. They are wondering why someone who hopes to be the future prime minister of this country would not want a security clearance. As I said, four of the five leaders in the House of Commons either have had a security clearance or have applied to get one. He is the only leader in the House who does not want to get one, because he does not want to know the truth. I am not sure what he is trying to hide, but he clearly does not want to know the truth.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and have listened to a number of Liberal and NDP members speak today, and much in their speeches is about the opposition leader. Instead of talking today about the issue of how we protect Canadians from foreign interference and from what India did and how we can resolve it and have less of it, cutting it down, why are they focusing more on politics than the safety of Canadians?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, a lot of Canadians are asking why the Leader of the Opposition does not want to do his job. He does not want to hold his party accountable. He does not want to see the details. He does not want to get a security clearance.

There are a lot of things the Conservative leader is avoiding, and we want to know why. If a person claiming to be the leader of the opposition of Canada does not want to get a security clearance, there is something wrong. Canadians need to dig a little deeper.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to say how surprised I am to be here and to see that at least some members of the Conservative Party of Canada are present at this emergency debate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot underline who is here or who is not.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I commend the Conservatives for having some members here. I want to also remember the last time, on September 19, 2023, when they were all ordered to stay away from the chamber and not make any statements or ask questions. I wonder who called the member for Carleton to vacate the chamber at that time.

In 2023, the Prime Minister rose in the House of Commons and affirmed what Sikh Canadians had feared. Agents within the Indian government were responsible for the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil and at a place of worship. Little did we know that this would just be the beginning of the shock waves across our nation, that we would find out about India's dangerous interference with Canadian democracy, public life and organized crime.

In the months that followed this historic statement, Sikh and South Asian businesses within my constituency and the city of Surrey began receiving threats of extortion and violent calls and messages. One of many examples is a local Surrey business owner who was threatened to either pay thousands of dollars or face consequences, with the extortionist stating, "If you do not pay us, we are going to burn your car, and then we are coming in 20 minutes."

Another experience involved a threat by an extortionist firing bullets through a home while families were present inside. To top this all off, multiple Sikh community leaders were given a "duty to warn" by the RCMP, indicating that they were in imminent threat of assassination due to their differing political opinions.

We then saw the home of one of Canada's biggest South Asian artists, AP Dhillon, being fired upon and vehicles in his driveway being lit on fire, all while it was being videotaped and subsequently aired by the perpetrators themselves, a technique designed to instill fear and terror in Canadians.

The RCMP stated that these actions by the agents of the Indian government were not only against Sikh Canadians who oppose the Indian government but also against anyone who opposes the Indian government for any reason. Let me remind everyone that if that is the case, then anyone who opposes the current Indian government can be a target.

I want to commend the RCMP, our intelligence agencies and all the law enforcement agencies of this country for their extraordinary work in discovering the Indian government's criminal acts and transnational aggression. I thank them. These actions are a grave threat, not only to the sovereignty of Canada but also to the basic public security of Sikh and South Asian communities. Sikh Canadians whose families come to Canada to build a safe and secure future for their families, fleeing prosecution many times and violence from the Indian government, now find that the violence is being brought to their doorsteps right here in Canada.

We will not and cannot leave these families and communities vulnerable in a time of need. As Canadians, it is our duty to serve and protect all those who have worked tirelessly over the decades, contributing to the betterment of Canadian society. Many of the children of those who fled are now Canada's top business owners, lawyers, judges, nurses, teachers, doctors and entrepreneurs. We must stand up for them as a united chamber.

With the revelations coming out of the RCMP having evidence linking Indian government agents in Canada to these threats, extortion and violent crimes, including the murder of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar and potentially other murders, the time has now come to put politics aside and unite as a country in condemning these acts of horrific violence.

There is a lot of propaganda coming out of India, and, in fact, even from the Conservative leadership, that states, "Show the evidence." It has now been confirmed that the RCMP shared the evidence with India. However, the Indian government refused to acknowledge it or co-operate with our authorities.

• (2225)

We know who else did the same: the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. He is the only elected leader of a political party of the House who has not agreed to take an oath of secrecy that is required not only to see either the evidence against the Government of India in the murder, extortion and harassment of Sikhs and South Asian Canadians but also to see the unredacted report of NSICOP that identifies current or previous parliamentarians in the Conservative Party of Canada who are influenced by or work for the interests of foreign governments.

Therefore there are only two institutions that refuse to see the evidence: the Government of India and the Conservative Party of Canada. This should make everyone extremely concerned. Does a person who wants to be Prime Minister and who is the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition not want to know the truth? Could it be because he does not want to see his own name in the report? Leaks from CSIS reports shown in the media have said that the state of India decided to support the MP from Carleton both financially and through institutes sympathetic to them to win the Conservative Party leadership.

Members and leaders within the House are elected to act on the concerns raised by their constituents. This means obtaining necessary security clearance that would allow them to identify threats from foreign nations, within their own parties and the chamber. For the last year, by not taking the oath for clearance, the leader of the Conservative Party has refused to protect the safety of Sikhs and South Asian Canadians. As the Prime Minister has revealed, there are former and active members within the Conservative Party who are or have been involved with foreign interference activities. Why does the leader of the Conservative Party continue to place his personal politics over the safety of Canadians?

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Foreign interference activities by India are at an all-time high. In fact, foreign interference from India far exceeds that from China, Russia or Iran, all non-democracies, as only India has been identified by the RCMP as a state that has had its consular staff actually gather information and coordinate with organized crime to commit crimes in Canada on Canadian soil.

To Hindu Canadians, I want to be unequivocally clear: This is not a Sikh or Hindu issue. This is a Canadian issue, an issue of Canadians versus the Government of India. Today it is about Sikhs. Tomorrow it will be about the Dalit, political opponents of the BJP, women's groups or Christians. Hindu Canadians cannot let the Indian media fool them.

This is a time when all Canadian parliamentarians must stand together, show the world that Canada is a place where people can speak their mind, express themselves and live free from reprisal. It is time for democracies to unite, stand by the rule of law and defend their citizens. It is a time for everyone, from the leadership of this country down to its citizens, to stand by our law enforcement agencies and take no lessons from those who try to intimidate and destroy us.

Canada is a free country and a sovereign state, and it will never allow a country to intimidate or threaten our citizens.

• (2230)

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately that was another Liberal speech that, instead of discussing foreign interference by India and the very serious allegations against that country, was more concerned about the opposition leader.

My question for the member is this: He comes from an area where extortion has risen by hundreds of per cent. I have gone there many times and heard from Canadians who are concerned about extortion. Part of that, as we have heard from the RCMP, is linked to Indian organized crime. There is no minimum mandatory penalty for extortion. Extortion has gone up under the current government, yet the member and his party did not support a private member's bill that would have actually handed out stronger sentences for extortionists. Why?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, if the member's leader actually looked at the report and saw the evidence, he would know who is dictating and actually orchestrating the extortion. The extortion is being done by a foreign agency whose diplomats sat in this country and gathered information. There are 22 who have been arrested, and eight for murder. I would like to remind the House that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Surrey Centre has the floor.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that the people who have been arrested for the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar have been and remain behind bars, so the argument of “bail, not jail” is inadequate in this case. The law enforcement agencies and the legal justice system of our country have actually maintained integrity and shown that they work.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was reflecting on what the member said in his speech, and I really appreciated one of the comments he made, which was that this is not an issue of Hindu versus Sikh or Hindu versus Muslim. This is a Canadian issue, and we are looking at protecting Canadians of all backgrounds and recognizing that Canadian law is so vital and so important.

I wanted to ask him about how he feels about the Modi government and its use of genocidal language against minorities in India, including Muslims, Sikhs, Dalits, members of the LGBTQ2+ community and, of course, women, which he mentioned. I am wondering whether the member sees that there should be some sanctions put on the government, some restrictions to their movement, if the Modi government is going to be using such genocidal language against minority groups.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I think all tools are at the disposal of the government and should be used. I think the very first measure, when it was discovered that Indian officials were involved, was the expulsion of those diplomats. My understanding is that more measures will be forthcoming, and I would not mind supporting what the member opposite was just saying. When minorities are being threatened and persecuted, or genocidal statements are being made about those communities, and the Sikh community has been victim to those genocidal tendencies, I think all measures should be on the table. The world should unite against any government that ever thinks or tries to act in such a manner.

• (2235)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the member's speech, he mentioned that the Indian government played a key role in the leader of the official opposition's leadership. Is that the reason why the leader of the Conservative Party is not seeking that security clearance, so he can pay back the Indian government for doing what it did in his leadership race?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague is probably fairly accurate in that. I think there is a grave concern about that, but obviously the leader of the Conservative Party will not look at it.

As my colleague from Kingston and the Islands stated earlier, it is very strange that the leader of His Majesty's opposition, of the Conservative Party, has not made any statements on his Twitter account, any social media or his party's account. Only two Sikh members of his caucus have posted that statement. He has not made any public statements to the media. He has not taken any questions on it, nor has he condemned the Indian government at all, which he normally spends a very gracious amount of time with.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly resonate with the comments made by the member for Edmonton Strathcona that the Modi government displays a hard-right approach of polarization and of fomenting hate against minority groups within India. Our focus tonight is the horror of the RCMP's allegations that the Indian government is actually interfering with and, in fact, responsible for the deaths of Canadians on our soil.

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I resonate with the words of the many members who have called for unity. For us to unify in this chamber does require that the Leader of the Opposition seek top secret security clearance so we can all work from the same level playing field and have the same knowledge.

I am concerned. Having gone through the process, I know that, if one asks for top secret security clearance as the leader of a federal political party, it is not given as a right. CSIS and the security agencies go through one's background and history with a fine-tooth comb to ensure there is nothing that compromises the individual. On that basis, I would, not as a question but as a comment to all my colleagues on the Conservative side of the House, urge their party leader to pursue top secret security clearance because it is only in his hands to remove the cloud of questioning. The kinds of questions being raised tonight can be removed only by the leader of the official opposition asking for that investigation of his own background that would clear the air and ensure that nobody thinks he is compromised.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, that is what every member of the House from every party, save and except the Conservative Party of Canada, has been stating. We need to be unified against any foreign transnational aggression, and the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada should ask for the oath, get clearance and look at it. If he cannot obtain clearance, he should stand in the House and say that he does not pass the security clearance and make it abundantly clear to the House so we know why he cannot take it.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say it was a pleasure to speak today, but it is certainly not the case tonight in the House. The news and the allegations from the RCMP are extremely concerning, and they must be taken seriously as opposed to what has taken place tonight in the House. This debate is primarily about the Prime Minister, who has the power to take them seriously and has not done so.

Any foreign interference from any country, that we have been hearing about in the House and outside of the House with the Liberal government for years, needs to be stopped. The government's first job is to keep citizens safe from foreign threats. The very fact that we are here in this place debating such a serious issue demonstrates that the government has failed. The government has failed in its obligation to keep this country safe and to secure the integrity of our nation. It is a natural consequence of nine years of incompetence, of chaos and of an attitude that puts the divisive nature of the Prime Minister over the security of the public. We have seen it time and time again and particularly in the last year.

Canada has become a playground for these activities. We hear it, the evidence is there and multiple people have said it out loud on record, and still it is ignored. While tonight's debate descends into unserious political distractions, Canadians need to know who knew what and when and why it took so long for the government to act.

While we are here to address the allegations about foreign interference in India, this is about much more than that. It is certainly about India, but it is also about Beijing. It is about the tyrannical regime in Iran. It is about all of the times that our Prime Minister made a mockery of our democratic processes and frankly, our values.

Every Canadian should be concerned, because it is putting our lives, our freedoms and our country at risk. The allegations that have been made are serious, incredibly so, and they should be investigated and pursued to the fullest extent of the law. As a country, we must stand resolutely against the attempts of other actors to interfere with the rights of our citizens and our democratic process. The idea that a foreign state would even attempt anything near these allegations certainly merits more than the anemic response provided by the Liberals at every turn over the last nine years.

Furthermore, any suggestion that individuals collaborated or colluded with these attempts, or in any other attempts, should be fully investigated, and again, pursued to the fullest extent of the law. That is really not up for debate.

Here is what these suggestions should not be. They should not be used as a means to score cheap political points that nobody is buying anymore to divide our nation into smaller and smaller groups, into smaller and smaller factions. What the Prime Minister did when he appeared in front of Justice Hogue last week is exactly that. He went there with one mission, which was to level unfounded, unproven and unfair allegations against members of this party and members of his own party, casting aspersions.

● (2240)

If we cannot name the parliamentarians, then it should be equally wrong to say anything about them, such as what we know or their party affiliations. Frankly, the Prime Minister cast aspersions on the entire House and then walked away from the podium. It is behaviour like this that is unbecoming of a prime minister and has made a mockery of this whole process. If we look outside of the House and listen to what people are saying, it has made a mockery of this entire issue, which is unfortunate because it is a serious one. He should be less focused on trying to make this a mockery and more focused on the serious implications that it has for our national interests. He is more than just the Liberal Party leader, although I do not know how long he is going to be the Liberal Party leader; he is the Prime Minister, and he should remember that. However, I suspect it might be difficult when his caucus is revolting against him and he needs to focus at least a bit of attention elsewhere for the first time.

My parents always told me growing up that if a person is going to make a serious allegation about Conservatives being part of something, they need some evidence to back it up, and that is what we are asking for. We are asking for the Prime Minister to release the names. If he has evidence about the claims he has made about MPs in the House, he should release the names. We all know that he can do that. We are asking the Prime Minister to release the names of the individuals who have been accused so we can deal with the actual problem and move forward constructively. That is what Canadians want to know on the matter at hand. However, the Prime Minister will not, because this is another crass and pathetic attempt by him to divide, distract and deflect from his mistakes.

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Maybe they are not mistakes. Maybe it is an intentional hiding of facts the Prime Minister has known about for a very long time, rather than trying to fix the issue at hand or look serious while doing it. He is trying to cover up that his caucus is in open revolt of his leadership, and it is a convenient distraction. He is trying to cover up that he has destroyed our economy through higher taxes, higher inflation and higher government spending. He is trying to cover up for his own failures to protect this country and safeguard the rights of Canadians. While this behaviour is unbecoming, we really should not be surprised by it. It has probably even benefited his prospects electorally; otherwise, why hide anything at all?

The opposition parties have acquiesced to his tactics of swearing them into secrecy so they cannot do their jobs and cannot effectively prove their case. That has been proven tonight over and over again. Any opposition leader who has bothered to speak in the House to this motion could not hold the government to account. If they really knew there was something in the documents, then rather than sitting back, they would have asked the government what it has done, but it is exactly nothing.

The Liberals have muzzled their opposition so they can continue to turn a blind eye to the obvious wrongdoings, and they have brought the cabal along with them to acquiesce to all of it. They used to be members of an opposition that could hold the government to account, and now they have been silenced. We do not have to look very far to see that they have been completely ineffective at prosecuting the government's failure on foreign interference. After all, it is the Prime Minister who turned a blind eye when foreign interference was coming from Beijing, when a Communist dictatorship was spreading misinformation and even buying Liberal Party memberships to influence nomination races. To that I say release the names.

This is the Prime Minister who took six years to declare the IRGC the terrorist organization that we all know it is, and it still uses Canada as a safe haven to fundraise, to recruit, to intimidate our own citizens and to possibly play a role in our electoral process. To that I say release the names.

It is this Prime Minister who employed the Emergencies Act, trampling on the rights and freedoms of Canadians for purely political opinions when they did not agree with them. To that, Canadians say release the names.

This is the Prime Minister whose ministers mysteriously sat on a CSIS surveillance warrant for a Liberal power broker for 54 days. To that I say release the names.

• (2245)

This is the Prime Minister who appointed Liberal insiders and personal friends to investigate the misdeeds of his own government. These are the things that happened under the Prime Minister's watch, and his weak leadership is the reason they are happening more and more.

Our adversaries know that Canada is an easy target and that they can get away with almost anything here. The Prime Minister is actively in the process of proving them right at every single turn. We have a common-sense ask of the Prime Minister. It is to release the names. Canadians want to know. He should release the names of

the individuals who have collaborated with Beijing against Canada, the individuals who have collaborated with India against Canada and all the people who knowingly and wittingly worked with hostile foreign states for personal gain.

It is an easy thing to do. The Prime Minister did it once in the House of Commons already, and he can do it again. However, he will not. The Prime Minister does not seem to want to do that. He seems to want to continue the sideshow and political theatre as long as possible; this allows him not to talk about the issues that he does not want to talk about. He has lost all semblance of control. He looks unhinged. The Prime Minister continues to insist on some nonsensical argument about secret briefings when he can walk over here, two sword lengths away. He is pretty tall, so it is probably fewer than 10 steps. He can walk over and tell the Leader of the Opposition exactly what the problem is, but he will not do that. Why is this? It is because he is using this for political gain.

If the member for Carleton takes the briefing, by the admission of the Prime Minister's own chief of staff, he will be unable to speak about the results or act upon them, just like the Prime Minister has failed to do. He cannot do that in any way. His own office says that. In fact, the former leader of the NDP says that too. He deserves the information and not the handcuffing. The CSIS Act actually allows for this. It allows for anybody to offer any information on anybody about risks of foreign interference without forcing them into sworn secrecy.

I want to repeat that. The CSIS Act actually allows the Prime Minister to walk over here and tell the Leader of the Opposition everything he needs to know. Why is he not doing that? It is because he does not want to deal with the problem in his own caucus. The government insists again and again on secrecy without ever telling us why. I will tell members why. It is because the Prime Minister is hiding things from Canadians once again. It is because he is scared and because he has benefited from it politically. What is the Prime Minister hiding? What is he so scared of?

We know there are individuals from all parties who are rumoured to be implicated, but Conservatives are not scared of anything. If the government acted, Canadians would not be asking questions about why it is keeping secrets. I think everybody would be better off, including every single member of Parliament, who has now had the Prime Minister cast aspersions on them. That is irresponsible behaviour from a Prime Minister. The sooner the names are released, the sooner we can take action to ensure that our institutions and our political parties are free from interference. Otherwise, it is going to get way worse from a variety of actors, from a variety of places. As I said, they know that Canada is an easy place to do their dirty deeds.

Tonight's debate is another example of how the Prime Minister has failed on foreign interference. At the Hogue commission, the Prime Minister admitted that our intelligence agencies have been gathering information for years and that India has been committing foreign interference on Canadian soil. However, it is clear that he did nothing to act on it, even after a real and present danger to Canadians was known. An act was carried out; people have lost their lives. Even when provided with the opportunity to protect Canadians against extortion, one of the violent actions that the RCMP has accused Indian officials of engaging in, the Liberals voted against the bill.

• (2250)

It was a bill by my co-deputy leader, the member for Edmonton Mill Woods, Bill C-381, the protection against extortion act. Every single one of them voted against it. Some did not show up, but the rest voted against it.

The United States managed to thwart an assassination attempt on American soil. Canada was unable to do so. When the issue of Chinese interference came up, the Prime Minister tried to claim that it did not exist, and then that had been exposed as an outright falsehood. His government stalled for years on the creation of a foreign influence registry. It was only ever introduced as a result of Conservative pressure.

The government also did everything it could to avoid a public inquiry into foreign interference. Do members remember the special rapporteur, the friend, the ski chalet neighbour? Conservative pressure made sure that this was a full and open public inquiry so that everybody could see.

It is clear that the Liberals have been ignoring the issue of interference. Just let us look at what is happening in our streets right now. Let us look at the international terrorist organizations parading their slogans through Canadian streets, the organizations designated as not-for-profits not so long ago. Let us take a look at the increasing violence and crime driven by multinational gangs and cross-border smuggling. Let us take a look at the country's reputation, lying in shambles on the floor of the international community.

It is only going to get worse, but the government continues to sit around and pretend nothing is wrong. The Liberals passed Bill C-5 and Bill C-75, making it easier for violent criminals to be released back onto the streets again and again, while only being punished with a slap on the wrist. The Liberals repealed mandatory minimums for crimes like extortion with a firearm. They voted against Bill C-381, which would bring back this mandatory minimum punishment for extortion and implement even more tools for prosecutors and police to go after ringleaders and multinational gangs.

Extortion is five times higher than it was 10 years ago, but the Liberals are voting against the very things that they could be doing to stop all of this while pretending to have a debate, to say the right things, to placate the Canadian public, leading them to believe that they have acted when they have not.

Is the government going to empower CSIS or the RCMP to be able to do their jobs, instead of interfering in the work of those security agencies? Are they going to do a better job at screening the

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individuals coming into our country? How about tracking down the one million people the government lost and still cannot find?

We need real, decisive action to fix this problem. We need to enforce laws that we have on the books. We need to stand strong against interference, not cover up allegations and hide the evidence. We need Canadians to trust that everybody here is doing the right thing. We need our rights and our integrity back.

A common-sense Conservative government will put those criminals in jail where they belong. We will take action whenever and wherever we are notified, despite the Prime Minister's inability to walk across the floor and tell the Leader of the Opposition what the problem is. We will work with the RCMP and CSIS, not against them, and we will uphold the integrity of this country by running a government for all Canadians.

It starts with releasing the names. For the good of our political system, for our values, for our country, for the good of accountability to the people, release the names, I say to the Prime Minister. Anything short of that tells everyone what they already know: The Liberals are hiding from accountability. Canadians simply deserve better.

• (2255)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about political advantage.

It is well known that there is only one leader who took political advantage, and that is the leader of the Conservative Party. India intervened to make him the leader of the Conservative Party. It is not only that: If we open up any media outlet today or the social media in India, they are saying "Invest hundreds of millions of dollars to make sure that the leader of the Conservative Party becomes the next prime minister of this nation."

The second question from the hon. member was about releasing the names. If the Leader of the Opposition takes the secrecy oath, then he will be able to get that information right from CSIS and the RCMP. The only reason he is worried is that six of his caucus members are the candidates who are passing information to India. That is why he does not want to take an oath: He does not want to expose his own members.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite. The Leader of the Opposition won his leadership race with such a huge margin that he did not need help from anybody. The fact is that he is going to be the prime minister of the country, actually with help from the members of Parliament who continue to drive this country further and further into the ground.

With respect to the second question, the member opposite has been here for a while longer than I have. He might not have known this before the current debate, but if he was paying attention then he would know that the member for Carleton does not have to take a secret briefing. The Prime Minister can walk over here and tell him all the information. However, do members know what? The Prime Minister is doing this for a political reason: to keep that secret. That is absolutely true, and every single member on this side of the House, whoever has not signed the letter and whoever is not revolting against him knows it is true.

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• (2300)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening all night to the debate. As members can imagine, I am deeply engaged with the foreign interference file as someone who has been targeted.

One main disservice was done through testimony at the Hogue inquiry. It actually came from Erin O'Toole, the former leader of the Conservatives. The name that was tied to the testimony was actually that of a retired Conservative senator, Senator Oh. Mr. O'Toole indicated very clearly that he did not at the time want to raise the issue, because he was concerned that somehow and somewhere, somebody would attack him by saying he might be a racist if he brought the issue up.

That is one name that we know of where there is a potential concern. Notwithstanding, the member talked a lot about naming names. I fully support naming names. I called for that to happen. I raised a question of privilege to the Speaker that was rejected.

Will the member and her party support my call for the government to establish a formal process, whether through PROC, some other committee or even back at NSICOP, so we can actually go back to look at the issue, examine the names and give an opportunity for the people to come forward so there are no due process issues about their potential involvement and those who are semi-wittingly or wittingly assisting in foreign interference activities? Will the member and her party do that so we can get to the bottom of this and stop playing politics?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, if the NDP member wants so badly to release the names, then she should convince her leader to make the same call to the Prime Minister, rather than covering up whatever he is hiding.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud our co-deputy leader, the member of Parliament for Thornhill, for her speech and also for her advocacy. She touched on a topic that a lot of Canadians are talking about, which is how divisive the Prime Minister is. He is pitting either one community against another or Canadians against each other. It always benefits him for there to be a distraction from his own failures. In this case it is his failure on foreign interference.

We hear the Liberals keep saying they cannot release the names, but it is actually the CSIS Act itself that says it allows the government to offer information to any Canadian about specific risks of foreign interference without forcing them into sworn secrecy or controlling what they say.

Our leader is a Canadian, and he is 10 steps away from the Prime Minister. What is possibly stopping the Prime Minister from walking 10 steps this way? He was grandstanding and distracting at the Hogue commission, and he laid down baseless allegations against the Conservative Party. He even named his own party and implicated its members. What is stopping him from walking 10 steps over this way and just releasing the names to our common-sense Conservative leader, the next Prime Minister of Canada?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the Liberals are not more furious with the Prime Minister for casting aspersions on every single one of them as he named them at the Hogue commission. He is the most divisive prime minister in the

history of this country. Just look at the communities that he pits against each other. Look at how he has made this a playground for foreign interference. Look at how he has done nothing about listing terrorist organizations that he knew were functioning right here on Canadian soil, intimidating Canadians from coast to coast in every community. He turned a blind eye to that, and for that his caucus should be furious with him.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very concerning question. In my friend's riding of Surrey—Newton, there is a very prominent Hindu temple.

The Vedic Hindu Cultural Society Surrey wrote a letter to the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada asking him to not send the Conservative MPs for Edmonton Mill Woods and Calgary Forest Lawn to its temple because of their ideological difference, but to instead send the MPs for Calgary Heritage and Thornhill. Many believe it was foreign interference that wrote this letter.

Could the MP for Thornhill please tell us what the ideological difference is between her and the MP for Calgary Forest Lawn?

• (2305)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, if the member knows anything about the kind of advocacy I do, he would know that I believe every Canadian is welcome in every single institution in this country. Under a Conservative government, we will make sure that we are not dividing Canadians as the Liberals are doing to distract from the issues.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: I never said anything about that.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I know the member is still yelling his question out, but if he would allow me to answer.

We are going to finally have a government in this country where everybody, no matter what colour they are, what language they speak or when they came to this country finally feels welcome instead of what the Prime Minister has created.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Thornhill has posited to the House that, if someone does not want to release the names, they are hiding from accountability. As somebody who has a chief top secret security clearance and never hides from anything, I want to assure her that the main concern I have is to abide by the law.

I was trained in law; the law matters, and our security laws and the protection of information require that certain information not be revealed to anyone. Therefore, while there is an exemption in the CSIS Act, it does not mean that someone can walk across the floor and take into their own hands reckless activity that could endanger our security and intelligence assets found around the world.

What would our Five Eyes partners think of dealing with a country that takes its security so loosely and, with respect to our intelligence assets, with such a cavalier disregard for their safety that we publish things? That is why it was such a concern for our special rapporteur that CSIS operatives were sending things to The Globe and Mail.

We need to have a full debate that focuses on Canadians' safety. Again, it should be country first, party second or maybe never.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Green Party has demonstrated that she wants everybody under the same secrecy as she is under, but she has been ineffective in this entire debate.

The Prime Minister has demonstrated that he has the ability to publicly communicate classified information on this issue. He did so in the House. He did so when he kicked out a member of his own caucus, which is the only thing that he did before musing about welcoming him back. He did so at the Hogue commission. He is allowed to do what the member from the Green Party is saying she is not allowed to do. She has been entirely ineffective in this whole thing, and I do not think the Leader of the Opposition should take any lessons from her.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my dear colleague from Brampton North.

This past week, Canadians were taken aback, as we heard in the different speeches throughout this emergency debate, by the scope and seriousness of the Government of India's ongoing efforts to interfere in Canadian affairs. Last Monday, the RCMP made public its findings that Indian government diplomats have been engaged in serious criminal activities in Canada. These activities target Canada, Canadians and individuals residing in Canada, as well as Canadian interests. They are covert, deceptive and illegal. They threaten all levels of government, the private sector, academia, diaspora communities and the general public.

Through Canada's national task force and other investigative efforts, the RCMP has obtained evidence that demonstrates these agents supported violent extremism in both nations and links agents of the Government of India to homicides and violent acts. It demonstrates they were using organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment for the South Asian community in Canada and interfering in democratic processes. The most serious of these criminal acts took place in June 2023 when proxies were used to murder Hardeep Singh Nijjar in front of the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, B.C., a holy place.

This government is determined to protect Canadians from these attacks. To push back against foreign interference, this government passed Bill C-70, amending the CSIS Act and the Security of Information Act for the first time in 40 years.

In May, I spoke to and seconded my colleague from Surrey—Newton's motion, Motion No. 112, about the real threats posed by foreign governments that seek to intimidate diaspora communities in Canada. Motion No. 112 specifically references the sharing of information and security intelligence to protect democratic institutions, maintain the rule of law and prevent violence and extremism.

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Information sharing with key allies is critical to pushing back against hostile actors. Since the Government of Canada made these allegations, Canada's Five Eyes allies have come out in support of Canada, because we share intelligence.

In response to the shocking revelations that Indian diplomats including India's high commissioner were actively undermining Canadian law, the Government of Canada expelled the commissioner along with five other diplomats. Evidence also shows that a wide variety of entities in Canada and abroad have been used by agents of the Government of India to collect information. Some of these individuals and businesses were coerced and threatened into working for the Government of India.

This is not the first time foreign governments have worked to intimidate diaspora communities in Canada. I mentioned this before in questions asked today. Under the previous government, the now Leader of the Opposition and Stephen Harper allowed Chinese police stations to set up shop in Canada. These became hubs where Chinese agents could intimidate, harass and even repatriate Chinese residents, claiming they were criminals.

Regrettably, efforts by Mark Flynn, the deputy commissioner of federal policing, to meet with his Indian law enforcement counterparts and discuss violent extremism occurring in Canada and India were unsuccessful. I call again on all levels of the Government of India to co-operate with these investigations. It is the only way forward.

• (2310)

This is a particularly sad time for the Commonwealth and all allied nations. Together, Canadians and Indians resisted the forces of 20th-century dictatorships in both the First and Second World Wars. They did this not to conquer but to preserve their way of life and build a better, more peaceful world based on co-operation, respect and a mutual commitment to a rule-based international order.

The beginning of the Commonwealth Charter reinforces:

the commitment of member states to the development of free and democratic societies and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of all the people of the Commonwealth.

I was born and raised in Canada, but this would not have been possible if it were not for members of my family, Sikhs who served in both India's and Canada's armed forces to fight for the safety and freedoms we enjoy. The Government of India's actions represent a gross breach of international law and also of its commitment to the principles that bind the Commonwealth of Nations together.

These are difficult revelations. I know that there is a real concern in the South Asian community. I urge anyone who has been victimized by threats or knows of others who have been threatened to come forward and report these threats to the RCMP. The safety of Canadians, regardless of their background or beliefs, is the top priority of the RCMP and of this government.

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The actions being perpetrated by India and other foreign states are a threat to Canada's national interests. They undermine Canadian sovereignty and social cohesion, diminish trust in our institutions and degrade the rights and freedoms to which all Canadians are entitled. This is why the Government of Canada will continue to denounce these actions as deplorable and unacceptable in the strongest possible terms.

Up to 30 arrests have already been made, and our public safety agencies will not stop working. We will not be intimidated. We will not be harassed, and we will have justice and answers for the flagrant disregard of Canadians as well as of international law. We need to remain united on all sides of the aisle and show leadership to protect our nation and our way of life.

• (2315)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start on a question for my colleague, I have a question for the Speaker with regard to how he will be allocating questions, considering that there are only two parties represented, that there are no Conservatives in the House right now—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is a learned member and should know better.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarity, I am just wondering how you will be allocating the questions this evening, considering the number of members who are in the House at the moment.

The Deputy Speaker: When people catch my eye, I will be more than happy to recognize them.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, all night tonight, we have been talking about very serious issues and why this is impactful for so many Canadians. I guess my question for the member has to come down to this: We brought forward a motion today. The leader of the NDP brought forward a motion asking for us to have a committee so that we can actually look at this in depth, these issues that we are facing. It would be an India-Canada committee, similar to the Canada-China committee.

I know that many members so far tonight have said that they did not stand up against it, but the Liberal Party shut that unanimous consent motion down. It was the Liberal Party that shut that down.

I am wondering if he has talked to his colleagues and if he can give us a rationale for why there was no support for that committee, which could have done some very important work for Canadians.

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her hard work on these issues of human rights. On the issue she has raised, I did not oppose it, but it is something that we are working on, on this side of the House, with a justice inquiry that is currently going on. I am a member of the ethics committee, where we are studying foreign interference, misinformation and disinformation, and there are several studies currently going on. I actually look forward to participating in what was suggested today by the leader on her side of the House. I believe that once many of the measures that are being taken right now are exhausted and we get recommendations from there, something of that nature could take place.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have asked before, we are debating a very serious issue today,

an issue of foreign interference, an issue of Indian government agents interfering in Canada, using organized crime, extortion, murder and assassinations.

Does the hon. member not think that Canadians who have tuned in and who have been paying attention will be disappointed that most of the arguments made by the Liberals, most of their speeches, are actually about the opposition leader and not about solutions and ideas and thoughts about how we can curb and stop foreign interference?

Why are they playing politics over the safety of Canadians?

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty surprised. I did not talk about the Leader of the Opposition at all. The funny thing is that, now that the member has mentioned it, I will actually respond with this: Richard Fadden, the former CSIS director, said, “The whole objective of the security clearance process at the level of the federal government is to make sure that classified information is not passed on, except to people with security clearances.”

The short answer to the question that was posed to him is that there is no way of doing it. He needs a security clearance. The Prime Minister was correct, I think, when he explained at some length that being a privy councillor does not give one access to information. He was right. The member needs security clearance to be given that information.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague for his thoughts on the misinformation and disinformation campaign that seems to be emanating from the Government of India. It is very coordinated. I am sure he has seen an uptick in bots on Twitter as well, and I wanted to get his thoughts on that.

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, we have seen not just one instance of media; we have seen a former Indian army official who literally stated that \$100 million should be spent to elect a Conservative government. It is clear that we have not heard the Conservatives really talk today about how we are going to tackle these issues they raise. They were talking about our Prime Minister and what he is not doing, when the Liberals are doing these things, with Bill C-70 and making arrests; the RCMP is actively engaged; and quite frankly, we have uncovered some of the most nefarious incidents we could ever think of.

• (2320)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in this House as the member of Parliament for Brampton North, a riding in this country that has one of the largest South Asian populations, the largest part being the Sikh community. These constituents are proud Canadians, and they cherish Canada for its constitutionally provided rights, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, our independent policing bodies and some of the highest standards for human rights in the world.

From a very young age, I have been an outspoken advocate, campaigning and advocating for many local issues, but one issue that shook me to my core at a very young age was an international issue. In 1995, I met a man by the name of Jaswant Singh Khrala on a trip to Canada. He was a human rights activist who had garnered global attention for his research concerning 25,000 illegal killings and cremations involving Indian policing agencies. His advocacy work led to his abduction and murder shortly after his return from Canada, which later led to the Central Bureau of Investigation in India prosecuting and sentencing nine police officers.

It was during the time of his abduction that it really hit me as to what we have in Canada. As a Canadian, I have always felt free to speak my mind without fear of persecution, although that is not the case in many places around the world, as we know.

However, as of late, that sense of security is no longer there, and I have heard those sentiments from the community as well. I have realized that the current Indian government and its diplomats will not let borders get in the way. It was the realization I came to last year when the PM stood in this House and spoke about the credible links connecting the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar to the Government of India and then again, on October 14, just last week, when the RCMP addressed Canadians directly because of the significant threat to public safety in our country.

The RCMP commissioner called this an extraordinary situation, which compelled the RCMP to speak about what they discovered in their multiple ongoing investigations into the involvement of agents of the Government of India in serious criminal activity in Canada. It is not their normal process to publicly disclose information about ongoing investigations, in an effort to preserve the integrity of investigations. However, they felt in this instance it was necessary to do so at this time in order to dismantle and disrupt the network that had been unleashed on Canadians by hiring criminal gangsters, with a trail leading to Indian diplomats ordered at the high levels of the Indian government.

Over the last year, the RCMP created a multidisciplinary team to investigate and coordinate efforts to combat this threat. The team has learned a significant amount of information about the breadth and depth of criminal activity orchestrated by agents of the Government of India, and consequential threats to the safety of Canadians and individuals living in Canada.

This is outrageous. It is shocking. I have heard first-hand from constituents about these threats. Although there was suspicion at the time, that suspicion has been brought to light by the RCMP.

● (2325)

An example that the RCMP gave that day was that 22 arrests had been made by different policing agencies across the country that were linked to an extortion that linked back to the Indian diplomats, and eight arrests were made that were linked to murder on Canadian soil.

When we scan the newspapers of the last year, we will also find other investigations, such as ones happening in Edmonton, that refer to 27 events, including five extortions, 15 arson offences and seven firearms offences, all linked to a scheme orchestrated in India and executed by people here in Canada. Despite law enforcement

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action, the harm has continued, posing a serious threat to our public safety. The RCMP reached a point where officers felt it was imperative to confront the Government of India and inform the public about some very serious findings that they have uncovered through all of these investigations.

Although attempts have been made to co-operate and work with the Government of India to ask the diplomats who served here in Canada to co-operate with the Canadian agencies in their investigations, we have not been met with any co-operation from the other side. It is very unfortunate that these attempts have been unsuccessful, which resulted in the Government of Canada's having to consider six diplomats from India as *persona non grata*.

Through the national task force and other investigative efforts, the RCMP has obtained evidence that demonstrates four serious issues. It is really important that I point out these four issues: one, violent extremists impacting both countries; two, links tying agents of the Government of India to homicides and violent abilities; three, the use of organized crime creating the perception of unsafe environments, targeting the South Asian community in Canada and, in particular, the Sikh community; and, four, interference in democratic processes. I have heard from many of my constituents who have been targeted in these different cases, and they too are shocked and maybe even more worried that the links are not just to local gangs and organizations, but that they go back to foreign governments.

As Canadians, I hope we can all agree that this is the most egregious type of foreign interference Canada has ever seen in its history. This deserves the serious attention of all parties in the House and it starts with the leaders of all parties. It is shameful that the Conservative leader is the only one burying his head in the sand and refusing to get a security clearance so that he can better understand the issue and how his party and leadership race have been compromised by foreign interference. I believe it is on all of us to do the work that is necessary to protect Canadians. This is one of the most serious things I have ever heard of, and I believe that all members in the House could agree on that.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I am quite worried about when we hear about the foreign interference is the implications of what Canadians will feel about our democracy. I am also very worried about what Canada's role should be in protecting human rights around the world.

We have called on the government to ban entry to BJP officials from India who have called for racist and genocidal violence against minority groups. We have called for the government to stop sending arms to India because we know that they might be used against these minority groups with the Modi government. I am wondering if the member would agree with me that banning and sanctioning Modi and his government is an appropriate response to their behaviour toward minority groups.

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Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I do agree that security clearances should be undertaken for all those who travel to Canada, especially those who are in places such as security agencies, policing, military and government. Those who are in violation of human rights should not be let into this country. Canada takes that very seriously. I would also encourage our authorities to make sure that those checks are in place and that we do not allow people like that into Canada.

• (2330)

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in her speech, my hon. colleague mentioned that the RCMP made very serious allegations. Some of them extend to Indian agents, through either money or possibly coercion, using Canadians or people on Canadian soil to conduct extortion. I know that is happening right across the country, but I have heard that a lot of extortion is happening in the Brampton area. There are very serious situations, with shootings at homes and businesses.

Would it not make sense, if foreign interference is happening and Canadians or at least people on Canadian soil are being used in this way, to give the police more tools? The police should have laws in their hands that they can use to not only prosecute criminals and keep them in jail longer, but work with them to find out more about who is involved in these criminal organizations. Right now, there are no mandatory minimum penalties, but the member voted against such legislation. Why?

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, first and foremost, to thank our policing agencies. The RCMP and all local police across this country have been doing exceptional work to make several arrests in the complicated scheme that has been taking place all over North America. We have our allies across the pond looking into similar occurrences happening on their soil as well. This is due to the co-operation taking place among our policing agencies.

We have five- to seven-year minimum sentences and have life imprisonment in this country for extortion. If life imprisonment does not stop extortionists because they are getting paid by foreign governments, what will?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this chamber, four of the five leaders either have a security clearance or are in the process of getting a security clearance. A lot of residents of Brampton are wondering why the Leader of the Opposition is not getting his security clearance. Is there something he does not want to know? Maybe the member can speak to that.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, there have been allegations of interference when it comes to the leadership race of the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. I think we should take these allegations very seriously and make sure that all party leaders are informed.

I encourage the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada to get his clearance, because it is not as simple as some of his members allude to and the Prime Minister cannot whisper this in his ear. He should get his clearance, find out what is happening in his party and take immediate action.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand tonight to speak to this very serious topic.

Last year, we learned that a Canadian citizen was killed on Canadian soil by a foreign government. Very few things are more serious for the House of Commons to deal with. Then, of course, last week, we learned from the RCMP that the Government of India is allegedly intimidating members of the South Asian community, committing violent criminal activity and interfering in Canada's democratic process, which are shocking allegations. They are allegations that Canadians from coast to coast to coast heard on Thanksgiving Monday, and we are reeling from them as we think about the attacks on our democracy, the attacks on Canadian citizens the impact this has particularly on the South Asian diaspora.

No role for the federal government is more important than ensuring justice for Canadian citizens and ensuring that foreign governments that interfere in our country are held accountable. We need to ensure that the Government of India is held accountable for the actions that have taken place. Any involvement of a foreign government in the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an attack on the sovereignty of Canada. Many Canadians across the country are living in fear of threats from foreign governments like India's. We must hear their voices.

I sit as a permanent member on the Canada-China committee, and we have heard from those in the Chinese community for a number of years. For over 30 years, they have been saying that the influence and interference by the Chinese government have threatened them. We have heard from Canadians that the Russian government has actively impacted our democracy and that the Iranian government is actively causing disorder and misinformation and making threats against Canadians in our country. Now, of course, we know that India is also doing that.

However, that is not all; there are others. I want to make it very clear that, while tonight we are talking about Indian attacks on the sovereignty of Canada and the Modi government's alleged murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil, it is important to recognize that foreign interference needs to be dealt with across the board. The New Democrats have been pushing for a very long time to ensure that all foreign interference is addressed and that we are looking at all bad actors attempting to harm our democracy and harm the citizens of Canada.

Tonight, as I stand here, I cannot help but think about members of the South Asian community who have been raising these concerns for years and who have not felt safe in their communities for years. I think about the fact that the South Asian diaspora helped build this country, yet they do not feel safe in their communities right now.

I listened to a radio program earlier this week where members of the South Asian community said they did not know how to talk to their children about the fact that they could be killed at any time on Canadian soil by a foreign government. They did not know how to talk to their spouses about the fact that they could be killed by a foreign government on Canadian soil.

● (2335)

We have heard that the violence that people are feeling, the extortion and threats of physical violence, is something that is not new in this community. We have heard tonight about the extortions and arson that have taken place in my city of Edmonton. That is deeply concerning. We have not dealt with this problem effectively. This has not been taken care of effectively. I am glad we are having this debate right now in the House of Commons, but we need to have a Canada-India committee, so we can look at this issue in greater detail.

We need to do everything possible to protect the South Asian community in this country. Some of my colleagues tonight have brought up the fact that this is not an issue of Sikh or Muslim against Hindu. This is a Canadian issue. It does not matter which faith or background people come from or what their views are. The idea that there cannot be a foreign government influencing our democracy or threatening Canadian citizens is something that we all have to get behind. We all have to push and fight for it, yet we have seen that, despite the fact that community members from various diaspora have brought this up for decades, very little has been done by either Liberal or Conservative governments.

In my opinion, the Liberals have been slow to act. They voted against our foreign interference commission. They also voted today against a Canada-India committee.

The Conservatives, of course, are compromised. The Conservative leader refuses to get a security clearance, even though we all know that the Conservative leadership race was interfered in by the Government of India. It is incomprehensible that the leader would not take the steps necessary to get information about how the Government of India interfered in the Conservative Party leadership race.

The fact that we have not heard a single Conservative today condemn the human rights abuses by the Modi government, along with the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, who is on social media quite regularly, has basically been silent, gone missing and refused to comment on this, is so shocking. Canadians are watching, and there can only be one rational explanation. It must be that the leader is afraid of what he will find, or perhaps afraid of whether he would even pass the security clearance screening. It has been months since the NSICOP report pointed out to Canadians that India interfered in the potential election of a Conservative leader.

Members will not be surprised to hear that I am also interested in talking a little about human rights. I speak about human rights a great deal in this place. I am the foreign affairs critic for the NDP. For years, I have expressed concerns in this place about the Modi government and its attack on minority groups in India. We have raised the alarm within the NDP about the violations that the Modi government has brought forward, and we have not heard an adequate response from the Liberals or the Conservatives.

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In 2022, the New Democrats called the Liberal government to ban entry to BJP officials from India who have called for racist and genocidal violence against Muslims, Sikhs and other minorities in India. We have also called on the Canadian government to boycott G20 events in India's Kashmir region. The Liberal government ignored both of those calls. I do not want this to just be me talking about the human rights abuses that I worry about with the Modi government.

● (2340)

Here is a 2023 report from Amnesty International on human rights in India.

National financial and investigation agencies were weaponized against civil society, human rights defenders, activists, journalists and critics, further shrinking civic space. Government officials, political leaders, and supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—the ruling political party at the federal level—advocated hatred and violence against religious minorities with impunity, particularly Muslims, marking a rise in hate crimes. Punitive demolitions of largely Muslim properties—including homes, businesses and places of worship—resulting in mass forced evictions after episodes of communal violence, were commonplace and went unpunished. India continued to impose arbitrary and blanket internet restrictions including internet shutdowns. The government withheld the Twitter (now known as X) accounts of journalists and civil society organizations without due process. Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized groups continued to face violence and entrenched discrimination, with women and girls facing specific attacks on their right to bodily autonomy.

Attacks on women and girls are something that Canada, with a feminist international assistance policy and a purported feminist foreign policy, should be very vocal against.

Human Rights Watch says that during the 2024 presidential campaign:

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2024 electoral campaign frequently used hate speech against Muslims and other minorities, inciting discrimination, hostility, and violence.

Inflammatory speeches, amid a decade of attacks and discrimination against minorities under the Modi administration, have normalized abuses against Muslims, Christians, and others.

The new Modi government needs to reverse its discriminatory policies, act on violence against minorities, and ensure justice for those affected.

Clearly, that has not happened.

I also want to talk a little about the fact that, right now, Canada continues to send arms to the Modi government. Canada's fourth-largest destination for arms exports in 2022 was India, with the highest-ever total of \$54.8 million. These items were designed for military use. They include ground vehicles, aircraft, firearms, ammunition, imaging equipment, software and parts. That goes against our Arms Trade Treaty.

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In 2023, the Minister of Foreign Affairs issued 38 permits for military goods and technology to India. We do not know what goods these export permits were for. Canadians deserve to have that information and to have that transparency.

We have called on the Canadian government to be more transparent. In fact, in the foreign affairs committee, I have called for a study on Canada's relationship with India, specifically regarding human rights and arms exports.

We know from past cases, including Saudi Arabia and Israel, that the Canadian government has not taken into account repeated human rights violations by those governments. We can only assume that this is the same case with India.

It should not need to be said, because it is in fact Canadian law, but the Canadian government should not be sending arms to any country that violates the human rights of its citizens.

What are our next steps? What do we do now? The NDP is calling for a complete review of India's diplomatic presence in Canada, with further diplomatic sanctions, if necessary. The NDP is calling for a ban of the extremist RSS network. The NDP is calling to establish a new Canada-India committee to help spur a dialogue and research into ways that we can protect Canada, Canadian sovereignty and Canadian citizens.

We want urgent action that will protect Canadians now.

• (2345)

It is too long to wait. It is too much to ask. We need to take these steps now. We need the reviews. We need the work to be done. I urge the Liberal government to reverse their objection to this committee and to let us have a space where these meaningful conversations can happen.

It is important that, as parliamentarians, we do everything possible to protect Canadian citizens and Canadian sovereignty. We want to ensure for Canadians that they can be confident in the democracy in our country, that they can be confident that India is not forcing its will upon the people of Canada or our democracy or other countries and that Canadians are safe in their communities to live, work and practice their faith as they wish. These are the values and the principles of being a Canadian.

South Asian Canadians deserve this. All Canadians deserve this, and when we do not provide that safety and security, we have failed as parliamentarians. We are a country of rule-based international order. We are a country that believes in justice, in human rights and in peace. However, those beliefs are not enough if we are not willing to do the hard work to ensure that every single Canadian has the ability to live a life free of violence and threat, in peace, with a sovereign and strong democracy.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her consistent work on human rights. The leader of the NDP has top secret security clearance, and he has done a fine job speaking on this issue. What are her thoughts on the fact that the leader of the official opposition claims he will be silenced if he receives top secret security clearance?

• (2350)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I think many members have spoken about how disappointing and shocking it is that the Leader of the Opposition refuses to get the security clearance that would give him access to the information he would require to be able to do his job. However, I also want to say that it was disappointing for me to be in the debate all night tonight and to listen to members of the Conservative Party provide some pretty questionable information on how the process would work.

We have heard from the RCMP and CSIS that the best, the smartest and the most effective way for the Leader of the Opposition to get this information is to get his security clearance. Frankly, just getting his security clearance would answer some questions for Canadians, even if he did not look at those documents.

Can he not get his security clearance? Is that the problem? I would like to at least know that the man who wants to be the next prime minister of this country could pass a security clearance. At this point, Canadians do not have that assurance.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will note that the hon. member listed a number of issues on which she felt very disappointed that the Liberal government has failed Canadians. I would actually agree with her on those points, yet she and her leader are the ones who continue to support and prop up the government. On that note, she mentioned that the NDP tried to strike a committee to deal with Canada-India relations today, yet the Liberals voted against it. The Liberals did not let that committee move forward. Why does she think the Liberals voted against the idea of striking an India-Canada relations committee?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that Edmonton is well represented today in the chamber. A number of us from Edmonton are here.

I agree with my colleague. I find it very disappointing that the Liberals shut down unanimous consent to put in place a committee to look at the Canada-India relationship. Knowing how difficult it is, knowing how dangerous this is and knowing that the Indian government has potentially taken the life of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil, I think it is urgent that this committee be struck. We will continue to try to work with all members of the House to ensure that this committee does come forward. I think it is vital, and I am disappointed.

One thing I would also say is that, tonight, we have heard member after member of the Liberal Party stand up and say that they did not oppose it. That is not really how it works. If the Liberal Party opposes it, unfortunately, those members really do need to have a serious conversation with whoever it was within the Liberal Party who actually shut down that committee; they need to convince their colleagues to finally support such work.

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Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard over and over again from the Conservatives in the debate tonight that there is a simple way for the leader of the Conservative Party to get the information. They suggest that all that has to be done is for the Prime Minister to walk across the aisle and whisper in the Conservative leader's ear to tell him who might be implicated in wittingly or semi-wittingly compromising Canada's democratic institutions and democratic processes on behalf of foreign actors.

I have to ask if that even makes sense to the member. Would a leader not want to look at the documents to verify this information, as opposed to hearing it from an adversary, someone the Conservatives consistently say they cannot trust? The Conservative leader simply says he does not need to go through a security clearance or look at the CSIS documents; he wants the Prime Minister to whisper names in his ear, and he will believe him. Does that even make sense to the member?

What sort of nonsense does the member think the Conservatives are trying to pull?

• (2355)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank my colleague for the incredible work she has done in combatting foreign interference in this country. She has been a tireless voice and has actively pushed the government to make fundamental changes to ensure that our democracy is protected. I am very grateful that I get to work with her.

Of course, it does not make any sense at all. Is this how we are going to handle national security now? Are we going to have some sort of game of telephone within the House of Commons and whisper to each other? Is that how we are going to handle national security? It is absurd. Every Canadian must understand that is a kids' party game. This is not how national security works.

The deep lack of seriousness of the Conservative plan of having a game of telephone to deal with the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil by a foreign government is utterly appalling.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed in a way. I have been here pretty well all night listening to the debate because of the interest in this very important discussion. The emergency debate was brought forth in this House by a Liberal backbencher and the leader of the NDP, but once they both spoke, they have never been back.

I wonder if they have any kind of—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member cannot say whether someone is here or not.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there is any indication of what these two parties, the Liberals and the NDP, will do

in terms of the coalition they still seem to have going, with regard to how they are going to deal with this type of RCMP investigation down the road.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, this intervention by the Conservative member is interesting, because it gives me, obviously, an opportunity to point out that the leader of the official opposition has not said a single thing on social media. He has not said a single thing in the House. He has not commented at all about this. The fact is that a Canadian citizen was murdered by a foreign government on Canadian soil, and the Leader of the Opposition not only will not get his security check done, will not even find out the information about how that foreign government may be infiltrating his own party, but he will not even stand up in the House and say a single word about it during the debate.

Absolutely, I am extraordinarily proud of my leader for bringing this emergency debate forward. I am extraordinarily proud of the speech my leader gave. If anyone would like to go online, I am sure they can see it there. They can find that speech and see exactly how strongly my leader feels about foreign interference and the attacks on our democracy and on Canadian citizens.

Why have we not heard one word from the leader of the official opposition?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to underscore once again my admiration for the member for Edmonton Strathcona's consistent work in human rights and peace. I benefit from working with her.

I support the bullet points she has put forward for what we must do to take on the right-wing populist, Hindu nationalist approach fomenting violence against minority groups within India, and regarding the Modi government and the RSS ban.

I want to ask the member one specific question on the special committee on Canada-India, which the Greens support. Would she support allowing a Green Party member of Parliament to have a seat on that committee?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, yes.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being midnight, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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