



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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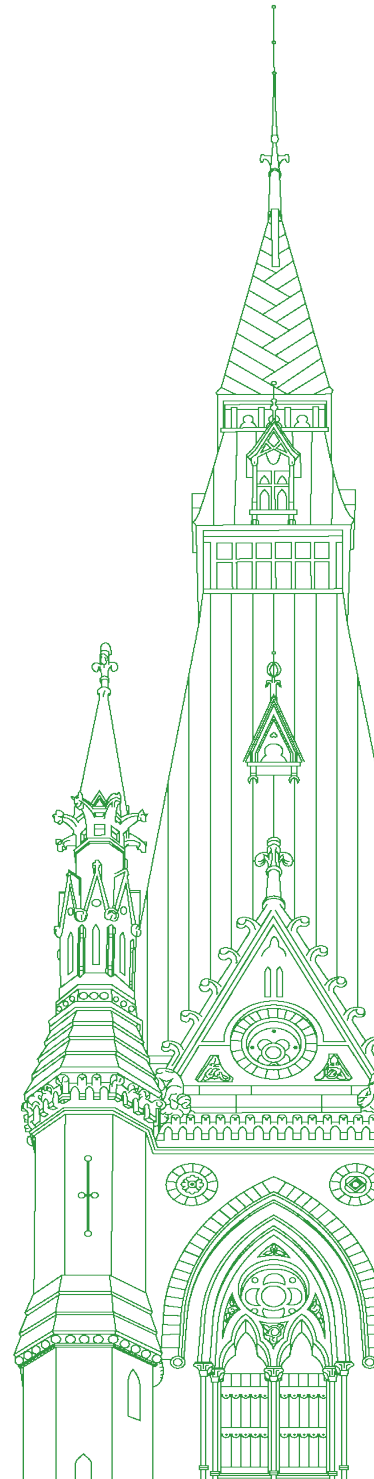
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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 13, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1005)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from December 12 consideration of the motion, of the amendment as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to see you today taking the chair as we begin our proceedings. I think back to the fond memories I have over the past few years. I think, like all of us, I kind of divide my life into the pre-COVID and post-COVID world. The very first time I was able to be away from home as restrictions were gradually being lifted during the immediate aftermath of the COVID lockdowns was when I took a trip to Nova Scotia and spent time in your beautiful constituency. It is really one of the most beautiful places anywhere in the world, and certainly in Canada.

I know that all MPs, if asked, would insist that their riding is the most beautiful in Canada. I would submit that some have a better case than others, but in the same way that every mother truly believes that her baby is the most beautiful ever born, we all have this view of our constituency. However, when we are looking at other constituencies, we can have a more jaundiced eye, and I can say that even the most jaundiced eye would find the beautiful Fundy shore of Nova Scotia to be a place of extraordinary natural cultural beauty and richness.

I am here to join a debate that has now been going on in the House for some time. There have been a series of amendments before the House, subamendments to an amendment to a motion that was made some time ago, and I thought it might be helpful, given how much time has passed, to refresh the memory of the House as to the wording of the amendment. I do this each time I speak to a subamendment, and I thought this morning I would do so in the other official language.

[*Translation*]

Here is the motion that was moved in the House by the House leader of the official opposition:

That the government's failure of fully providing documents, as ordered by the House on June 10, 2024, be hereby referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs;

Here is the amendment, as amended, of the member for Mégantic—L'Érable:

That the motion be amended by adding the following:

“provided that it be an instruction to the committee:

(a) that the following witnesses be ordered to appear before the committee, separately, for two hours each:

(i) the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry,

(ii) the Clerk of the Privy Council,

(iii) the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who respected the order of the House and deposited unredacted documents,

[*English*]

I could return to that point.

[*Translation*]

(iv) Paul MacKinnon, the former Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Governance),

(v) the Auditor General of Canada,

(vi) the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,

(vii) the Deputy Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada,

(viii) the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons,

(ix) the Acting President of Sustainable Development Technology Canada,

(x) a panel consisting of the Board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada; and

(b) that it report back to the House no later than the 30th sitting day following the adoption of this order.”;

[*English*]

Since the motion was moved, and the amendment, there have been several subamendments that have been debated before the House. I was able to speak to one of the other subamendments.

Now we are on a subamendment that has been presented by the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge and seconded by the member for Provencher that suggests that the amendment I just read:

...be amended by adding the following:

“, except that the order for the committee to report back to the House within 30 sitting days shall be discharged if the Speaker has sooner laid upon the table a notice from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel confirming that all government institutions have fully complied with the order adopted on June 10, 2024, by depositing all of their responsive records in an unredacted form”.

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This means, of course, that all of the current proceedings could be suspended if the original House order given in June, to which the main motion refers, were complied with. The government could immediately bring to an end all of it, including the process that would tie up the procedure and House affairs committee for some time, if the government were to instruct its departments to provide the documents in unredacted form. I think it is a very sensible, reasonable subamendment to have made.

I said I would return to:

(iii), the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who respected the order of the House and deposited unredacted documents.

I wanted to return to it to make the point that it is possible to fully comply. Full compliance was achieved by a government agency. It is interesting to note that the agency that did comply is in fact the agency whose responsibility it is to protect privacy rights: the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who, as one can imagine, is punctilious in having an official regard for the importance of keeping matters private.

We have heard, endlessly and volubly, from the few members of the Liberal Party who are allowed to speak on the matter or on any other topic about the ostensibly enormous procedural justice problems that would arise if the documents were submitted, as the House ordered, to the Clerk and the legal counsel. These arguments are, of course, nonsense. I will just restate what is wrong with the arguments: The documents would be submitted not to the view of the general public but to a law clerk who would have the ability to sift through and make sure that nothing is disclosed in a way that would compromise an investigation.

However, we should be clear about this; material is presented all the time to the police that has to be discounted at the time of an investigation if it was improperly acquired. The ways in which evidence is improperly acquired are not likely to conform very closely to the situation we have here. For example, if the police raid someone's house with a warrant in which they are looking for a certain offence, they cannot then go on a fishing expedition and look for other offences while they are in there under the auspices of that warrant. The court issued a warrant that gives them a very limited purview.

If the police entered the house looking for evidence that it is an illegal drug production facility, and while they are there they find some evidence of some greater crime, such as evidence that a murder has taken place, they can use that, but that is different. If they go in looking for the evidence of that drug facility and they find other things, relating to unpaid parking tickets for example, they cannot use that material.

We should be very careful of the procedural arguments being made by the government, and consider them as being inherently suspect. I should note that in general we should be very suspicious of the respect or the lack of respect for procedural justice, for the law, for the rule of law, indeed, for the rule of anything other than the absolute will of the sitting Prime Minister that is displayed by the government.

It is the same government that imposed the Emergencies Act, effectively a kind of martial law, in order to suppress a peaceful

demonstration that was happening outside this place. The government demonized the individuals involved in it, who were in fact mostly just hard-working citizens who were put in an impossible position by the government's ruthless and unfair actions towards them. It is a government that attempted, under the Prime Minister, to suspend the entire workings of responsible government for a year and a half.

● (1010)

I can remember coming here in late March 2020, shortly after COVID had been declared a pandemic. We were all in a personal panic, I guess, but we were all told to stay home. Our Prime Minister said, "Go home and stay home." I can still remember him standing at Rideau Cottage, which is misnamed, by the way. Rideau Cottage, which can be looked up on Wikipedia, where it has its own article, is actually a mansion on the grounds of a 20-acre estate, the grounds of Rideau Hall. The Prime Minister spoke from the front steps of his mansion on his 20-acre estate.

The Prime Minister is a man who, when he got bored of that place, could always take off and go to Harrington Lake, breaking a series of provincial protocols about crossing borders at that time, to stay at Harrington Lake where he has a beautiful farmhouse. I have been there under a previous prime minister; it is gorgeous. It is a private lake up in the mountains. It is spectacular.

The Prime Minister could go from one place to the other. However, he was saying to people who live in a bachelor apartment with no balcony and maybe facing into a light well in the apartment building so they get no natural light, "Go home and stay home", as if somehow he were their moral superior.

This has been, of course, the theme of the current government: endless virtue signalling about its own moral superiority. At the same time, it is engaging in the most vile practices, such as squandering the country's money and the inheritance of our children; driving up the price of housing to unaffordable levels; and creating a greater disparity of wealth than we have ever seen before, which is getting worse at an increasing pace as the Liberals adopt policy after policy designed to take from the tax base as a whole to transfer to the people who happen to be in positions to take advantage of the various things they are offering.

Almost every service now that has been created under the current government is effectively something that benefits primarily the people who are already well off. A great example is the \$10-a-day child care, which is completely unavailable in a rural riding like mine and to anybody who works shift work, who works at night, who lives in a rural area or who lacks the transportation to get their child to the day care.

The child care program basically eliminates the entire working class. It eliminated a lot of people during COVID. I understand their going in to work despite the Prime Minister's injunction for us to stay home, which I regarded as insulting and also as an order that cannot be enforced on members of Parliament, who have a right to come to Parliament.

When I came in, I used to take the O-Train. My wife and I have a place in the west end. The people who were coming in to work during COVID were all the working-class people who did not get a chance to stay home when we were told that coming to work put our life in danger, including the people whom we said were heroes, until later on, during the period of the convoy, the Liberals decided they were zeroes. Those were the people who were on the train; it was very interesting to see.

The mix of people on the train changed in that period. It became a lot less white and a lot more brown because, whether the government wants to say it or not, increasingly with the Liberals' immigration policies there is a clear racial divide. On the one side are people who have the better jobs, the privileged jobs and the jobs that give us access to, among other things, the reliable hours that allow one to take advantage of \$10-a-day day care and that also give us higher salaries.

On the other side are the people who do not have that option, who had to keep on working during COVID and who are excluded from programs like \$10-a-day day care. Is there some kind of compensation for these people, whereby if they cannot get it, they will get some kind of benefit? No, of course there is not.

Let us look at the carbon tax. The same thing is going on. The carbon tax is designed for the purpose of changing incentives. It is overtly designed for the purpose of re-incentivizing, of making it more painful and expensive to use carbon. What do we mean by carbon? We mean gas or diesel, home heating fuel and the burning of fossil fuels. Well, people who live in a rural area and who drive an older vehicle may not be able to afford to replace it with one of the fabulous new Cybertrucks, one of which I just saw on Parliament Hill for the first time ever in real life yesterday. They look as cool in real life, and as futuristic, as they do in the pictures.

• (1015)

Anyway, I guarantee that truck was not driven by a resident of my riding. I guarantee they cannot afford Cybertrucks or other electric vehicles, and even if they could, the reality is I cannot afford these things. I am paid an MP salary. I looked into getting a purely electric vehicle. I have a hybrid Toyota Highlander. I looked into whether it is possible to get an electric SUV, and the answer is that I cannot. They do not have long enough range to be workable in rural areas.

As such, we created an incentive that punishes people for having gas-burning vehicles, and we punish people who cannot switch because of the nature of where they live. I guess they could sell and come to the city and say that they just give up on living out there. My riding and all ridings in rural Ontario, and Nova Scotia, for that matter, are full of abandoned farms from over the decades as it ceased to be economically viable to live in one place or another, but of course, the people who left those farms, who had cleared the land or whose parents had cleared the land, have lost the value of that asset.

That is being increased by what the government is doing. They come to the city where housing prices and rents have doubled, meaning it is unaffordable. People in my constituency are poorer than the average. We are in the bottom quarter of the Ontario population, but there is a long-term pattern I have seen working here. I

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have been here a quarter of a century now. When I was first elected on November 27, 2000, there were only two ridings in the province of Ontario that were run by my party, the old Canadian Alliance, mine and that Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, directly to our north. Both are rural areas with lower than average incomes.

Within my old riding of Lanark—Carleton, we had an enormously wealthy area, Kanata, which had, among other things, a billionaire living there. I had the wealthiest suburb in Canada. At the far other end of my riding, I had the poorest municipality, the Lanark Highlands, in the entire province, outside of indigenous areas in northern Ontario. Interestingly enough, the results were that I did worst in the wealthiest areas and best in the poorest areas. The actual lowest-income spot in the entire riding was the only spot where I got more than 50% of the vote at that time.

That is a pattern that has not disappeared. That pattern has replicated itself over and over again, not just in my riding, but across the country. The Liberals are the party of the privileged, the well off, by which I do not necessarily mean that billionaire I was referring to, who made his money in high tech. I am referring to those whose wealth and well-being is the result of what is properly understood as privilege.

We hear a lot of nonsense about privilege. I remember one occasion when I was asking a minister a question about corrections. He rose up to say that the member was asking the question from a position of privilege. I literally have no idea what that sociological academic babble even means, but real privilege is a right that is issued as a licence. It is a licenced right. A driver's licence is a privilege. I cannot just hop in a car and drive. It is not an absolute right. One has to fulfill certain things.

More and more activities are effectively privileged in this society, and privileged to the same people over and over again. The rules are adjusted as necessary to ensure that those people, their friends and their relatives stay at the top, whether it is through adjusting the zoning laws, the housing regulations or the building costs so that, effectively, the housing supply is shrunk, making one group of people, and I am fortunate to be in that group of people who are older and own homes, wealthier at the expense of those who do not, who happen to be younger, more recently arrived in Canada and, typically, browner.

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If that seems like a picture of social justice to someone, then they have a very different conception of social justice than I do, but that is the government, and the government has been the opposite of transparent. We have been tied up trying to resolve the issue of getting the government to release documents revealing the depth of the scandal, and it has been willing to allow House business to be held up for over a month while we deal with this. That says a great deal about how much the Liberals are committed to having absolute opacity, a black box of government, under which they can carry on activities that I think do not meet the standards of any decent Canadian.

• (1020)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that the Speaker's riding is the most beautiful riding in Canada, but I have to take exception. Mine is the best riding in Canada. It represents the true Canada. It is a suburban riding. We have two rivers. We have agricultural land. We have high tech and emerging technologies. We have got 120 languages. It is 50% Christian, 30% no religion and 20% balanced faith. We have lots of children, and we have a lot of new schools, so it is the best riding that represents the Canada of today and tomorrow.

I have a question for the hon. member. He talked about pandemic management. I am very proud of the way our government successfully managed the pandemic. Under every metric, we did better than any other G7 country in managing the pandemic. Can the member tell us, compared to any other G7 countries, if there is any country, other than Canada, that has done better in any metric in managing the pandemic?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, do civil liberties count as a metric? Does freedom count as a metric? Does someone's ability to be with their loved ones when they are dying count as a metric? If they do, then we were terrible.

Not all of that was the fault of the federal government. It was the fault of—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North is, of course, interrupting, as he always does. I do not know if a speech ever gets made in the House that does not involve an interruption from him, whose word count is already far greater than that of the rest of us. He really ought to wait his turn. Let us see if he can do that for the rest of this day as a special test, as a Christmas gift to all of us. That would be so awesome.

When I am working here, and I am trying to get work done, I listen to music on my iPhone. I put in earbuds to drown out the endless drone from that member because he is like a black hole for ideas. Any useful thought that comes out of anybody's brain just vanishes into this behind-the-event horizon.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. We have just learned that the Minister of Labour and Seniors is invoking section 107 of the Canada Labour Code to force striking Canada Post workers to return to work.

Does the hon. member believe that this government respects the rights of workers and union members?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He has demonstrated that it is possible to be brief in one's comments, a lesson that the member for Winnipeg North would do well to remember for the future.

Since this is the first I have heard of this, I think it will be necessary—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am just sitting here saying nothing in my seat. For some reason, maybe due to the point of order I raised the other day, the member seems to not like my physical presence in the chamber. I do not quite understand why.

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into debate, with a little bit of push-back. Maybe members could just stick to the debate at hand.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, was that actually a point of order? That was not a point of order. I think that just made my point, did it not? I am thankful the member for Winnipeg North just made my point for me.

No, I did not hear about this until now. I have a policy when I am dealing with the media that I never comment on an issue to the first person who tells me about it. I want to go back to find out more. Once these questions are over, I am going to scoot back into the back to find out more about what the minister is up to.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to give thanks to my colleague who corrected actions in the House yesterday and did so in the traditions of the House. He has been here a little bit longer than I have. I wanted to recognize that that type of correction demonstrates a good example.

He does not know about this just yet, but there is an issue that is developing, which is related to back-to-work legislation that would be put on Canada Post workers. I know he was here the last time Canada Post workers were ordered back to work by the Liberals. I believe his party supported that. I would ask him to reflect on that now that this issue has been pushed to the forefront. Does he have any thoughts about that? I know he does not have the full information yet, but we are reflecting on what we did before because we pushed those problems decades along by putting workers back to work without an agreement.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, the member's intervention gives me the opportunity to make another point. I did talk about the election in 2000 when only two members of my party were elected in Ontario. That was an election where 98 out of 102 ridings in Ontario had members who were elected for the Liberal Party. The other riding was the one that the member currently holds, and it was Joe Comartin, who was a great member.

The answer is that I do not know about the details of this, and I am not my party's spokesman on this matter. I will look into this and try to find out more. Although, as I say, I know nothing, I guess that, if it is back-to-work legislation, we would wind up dealing with that legislation here in the next 24 hours, or however long.

Fortunately, my riding is close to Ottawa, so I am just driving back and forth, but for those who would have to cancel travel plans to be with their families, I am sad about that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always listen intently to the member's speeches, which I appreciate because he is one of the more erudite members of the House. I also appreciate that he actually has lines of argument in his speeches. Lately, we have been hearing steady streams of nothing but vitriol.

However, related to this question of giving documents to the RCMP, to an outside third party, is the question of whether the legislative branch is getting too close to the law enforcement branch. That, in some ways, is the issue. To look at an analogy, let us say that, at some future date, there were a coalition of parties in the House that said, "We demand to have the tax records of certain individuals", and that could be for whatever reasons. It could be spite or political retribution. It does not really matter. We know that presidents of the United States, in the past, even going as far back as former president Roosevelt, used the tax system to get to people. How would the member feel about Parliament asking for those kinds of documents so that they could be given to a third party, say the Canadian Taxpayers Federation?

• (1030)

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the hon. member for his kind words. Likewise, one of the highlights of my career was working on the parliamentary Special Committee on Electoral Reform, which this member chaired. He did an extraordinary job with what, I have to say, was a very difficult file. We do not often get the chance to say nice things about each other. I actually do think highly of most colleagues, both those who are presently here and those, like Joe Comartin, who have left. We have had many extraordinary people pass through, and I have been very fortunate to have been able to serve with so many.

However, the obvious thought here is that, in the example provided, with the purpose being that the documents were to be given to an external group, such as the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, I think that would be very unwise. What would happen here is that they would be given to the Parliamentary Law Clerk, who would then go through them and make independent judgments about them.

The purpose of doing that would not be merely to facilitate prosecution. In fact, I do not think that is the primary purpose at all. It would be to make sure that the potential for prosecution does not serve to hide the fact that there are other things going on, which may or may not be illegal, but that are outside of what Canadians expect to have with regard to the governance of their money.

We all understand that mere compliance with the law is insufficient in a government. It has to go beyond and try to match up with the various other rules and codes, such as the ethics code, which we have to sign on to, and the conflict of interest code, for which office holders have a separate code that is more restrictive. There are also

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other rules and norms in place, the very conventions that we have here, that are only partly written down. The practices are themselves norms that are not enforceable by law. They are enforceable by public opinion. Depriving the public of the ability to see relevant documentation is the concern that I have here.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering, when the member was doing his comparison to the Prime Minister, and how nasty he was in putting constraints on people during the pandemic, would he not acknowledge that 90% of the things he was saying were actually enacted by Doug Ford and the premiers? It was not the Prime Minister who was saying to individuals that they had to stay home. It was Premier Doug Ford, who it would be fair for the member to be critical of as opposed to the Prime Minister. I think that would probably be a better reflection, even though I personally supported Doug Ford's actions.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, of course, Doug Ford enthusiastically supported the Prime Minister's restrictions on civil rights, and that was one of the many points for which I have departed from Doug Ford.

However, I will point out that I do not love Doug Ford. Nobody who knows me thinks I love Doug Ford. If members were to go online to google "Doug Ford, Scott Reid, Stalin", they would find a reference to me comparing him to Stalin for the way he treated a member of his caucus when tossing him out. Doug Ford is no fan of mine. I have told the provincial party that it will start getting donations from me again when Doug Ford leaves as premier, and I am happy to say that in the House of Commons.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak to some of the ways the Liberal government is wasting taxpayers' money. One such instance is the green slush fund. Although we are debating the subamendment to the amendment today, I will quickly give a bit of history. I will talk about how we got here, where the Liberals went and continue to go wrong and how they are mispending taxpayer dollars in abuses that we continue to see and hear about in the media daily.

However, before I do, I would like to remind everyone back home that there are a number of Santa Claus parades this weekend that I will be attending. I like to promote that they are happening. Tonight, in beautiful Little Britain, Ontario, there is a Santa Claus parade. There are three of them tomorrow, one around the noon hour in Millbrook, Ontario, then in Bobcaygeon in the later part of the afternoon and early evening and then in Sunderland, Ontario, with the third one of the weekend. If anyone is watching in the TV world or listening to this, and they are in those areas and want to take in beautiful Santa Claus parades, there are spectacular ones happening at night. They will not leave disappointed, I guarantee that.

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As I mentioned, we are talking here about some rather unfortunate news that continues to happen. It is the continued disregard of a House order to produce documents, and the Liberals have had no qualms about paralyzing Parliament for a few months as we continue to wait for the government to accept and adhere to that order. I should remind the government that it was the democratically elected House of Commons that voted for the documents to be produced in the green slush fund scandal. I want to thank members of the industry committee, in particular, the member sitting next to me from South Shore—St. Margarets, who was one of the members leading the charge on exposing the scandal. He stayed up late at night in his office, going through countless documents to piece everything together and make the puzzle come together. That was thanks to his work, but, unfortunately, this whole thing is an absolute disaster for Canadians.

The member for South Shore—St. Margarets and I did a podcast on that, which is on my website and the member's website. In it, we go over the various steps in terms of how much corruption happened and how people appointed to this board to oversee this fund started to apply for contracts with companies in their names. However, they would kind of stand, wink-wink, nudge-nudge, either at the back of the room or outside the room while decisions for funding were being made. They would come back into the room when that was done, and the next person would leave. They would vote on money going to their companies. Holy smokes, it sounds unbelievable just to say this, does it not?

The minister knew about it; he became aware when people in his office said there might be a bit of a problem. Of course, in typical Liberal fashion, he thought, what does that matter? It is only taxpayer dollars, so why bother being accountable for that kind of thing? It is unbelievable; it really is. The fund had good intentions, but we can leave it to the Liberals to make a mess of it.

I think that is the core of discussions happening among Canadians and around kitchen tables, about how fragile the economy is right now and how the anchors of our economy, such as oil and gas, mining and lumber, have taken a massive hit. These are the traditional anchors of our economy; they produce jobs, opportunity, wealth and tax revenue to allow the government to spend on various social programs. I believe all Canadians appreciate how massively those industries have taken a hit. We have seen billions of dollars in investment leave this country to go to other markets. The United States is one country of many to which we have seen this flight happen, and many predictions are that this will accelerate over the coming months because of the policies put into effect by the government.

• (1035)

Most certainly, it goes around certainty within industry. As water does, capital takes the path of least resistance. Right now, there is very little certainty in the anchors of our economy in terms of starting and completing a project. There are many hurdles; in some of the fastest-growing industries, the fastest job creator in our economy is government. When the government bloats the middle and the top, things slow down. I am not talking about the service delivery people, who are doing amazing work. We all know that business likes to move fast, because trends can also take a turn very quickly.

Some people have heard that government needs to move at the speed of business, and that is the furthest thing from the truth of what is happening. It is rather unfortunate, because we now have a government that focuses on the management of the economy through grant programs, subsidies and new programs. Conservatives would say that we should level the playing field, make it a competitive environment and allow the market to take hold and make decisions. It is very tough for the government to really focus in and try to create a program that is good for everyone. There are tweaks and there are people who get left out. We often hear in our ridings about people not qualifying for certain programs or hurdles they have to get over in order to access the program. Some hurdles are too much for them, and they do not qualify; this creates problems in their life. If we can level the playing field, create a competitive environment and allow the market to take hold, those little nuances in the economy start to get filled in by the marketplace.

We can look at how uncompetitive we are in Canada. We have a few big telecom providers, a few airlines and a few grocery store chains. Yes, there are smaller ones underneath them, but they are all owned by the same company. That is a massive problem when we are talking about competition. As we all know, competition means a better price, better service and better products. In a competitive environment, operations are always pushing for those targets. If they are failing to achieve those targets, new operations start up and start to fill in those gaps that have been created by the bigger ones getting sloppy.

However, when there are barriers to competition, those small cracks do not get filled in, so we do not actually get better products and better service at better prices. We see that in the sectors I mentioned earlier. It is much better for the individual to make choices based on their needs than to have a one-size-fits-all program. We have seen time and time again that this does not work for everybody. Everybody's life is different, and people need to be able to make their own decisions. Everybody should be able to make a choice based on their circumstance.

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As I said earlier, the market will provide solutions. We can look at areas in which the government has little control in the marketplace. Let us take the beer industry, for example. Pretty much all of our ridings have a brewery in them, or even many. The Speaker's has a couple. This is an area that the government has not been regulating to the point of stifling the competition, as it has done in the telecom or the airline industry. There are different kinds of breweries everywhere. There are different kinds of beers being made for every single taste. Some might not be big sellers, but it is there if people want to try. If they like it, they are able to consume it. The point is this: When we allow the market to flourish, the market will provide. When people have more choices, when they are freer to make decisions, this generally makes for a happier population altogether. When we look at where the government clamps down the most, we will see the most unhappy people. This is something that we, as Conservatives, hold to be fundamentally true.

● (1040)

If the government were in charge of the music industry, and this started with Confederation, I pretty much guarantee that we would still be listening to chamber music. We would have some cellist union or something upset about this or that, and there would be a bureaucracy that would not be able to move. Meanwhile, there are many different genres of music right now for everybody's taste; this keeps developing over the years and months. We always have something new, and trends go up and down; this is because we have artists with the ability to make their music and their product. Some make hits and go on to make lots of money and some still play in their garage just for fun, and there is nothing wrong with any of it.

It is all around less regulation and less red tape; this lets people who make those ideas flourish, creates a level playing field and lets the consumer decide. This is why we are talking about the accountability part and allowing that direction to take hold.

One issue I am having in my portfolio, as the critic for Crown-Indigenous relations and Indigenous services, is the issue around Jordan's principle. This is really starting to heat up now. Members might have seen the news the other day. APTN, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, published a series of reports about how badly the government is doing on Jordan's principle, which is about ensuring that children are funded for care needs. Before Jordan's principle, it was usually an issue of who pays. Through court cases and other methods, the federal government is responsible for youth. The Jordan's principle measure is meant to ensure that Indigenous youth get the care they require immediately and that there is no question about the cost.

According to APTN, there is a backlog about 144,000 files deep for applications to Jordan's principle. Those are usually people who are looking for certain health care costs to be covered. According to APTN, there is no deadline or path to clearing this backlog. As I just mentioned, it is a commitment to uphold the rights of Indigenous children.

For those just joining, it is a principle named in honour of Jordan River Anderson, who was a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation. Jordan's principle was designed to ensure that first nations children receive the same access to public services as non-Indigenous children, without delays or disruptions.

Our party's leader, the member for Carleton, has said that if a Conservative government is elected in the next federal election, we will fully fund Jordan's principle to ensure that no child, regardless of where they live or their heritage, would be denied or delayed essential services because of bureaucratic red tape. Again, the current government has failed to live up to this commitment. Some of these Indigenous children face some of the most serious health and social challenges and continue to be denied the services they need to be able to thrive. Those services could be from health care, education, mental health services or basic needs such as mobility aids and medicine. These are the services promised by Jordan's principle; unfortunately, they are still being delayed or denied.

Unfortunately, as we approach the Christmas break, there are now reports surfacing about massive layoffs of educational assistants right across the country because of delays in Jordan's principle. Another one came out just this morning. This, of course, raises a number of concerns about whether the Indigenous students affected will be able to return to class in January. We have talked many times in the House about the historical injustices that Indigenous peoples, particularly children, have faced. Again, Jordan's principle was meant to correct all of that. Unfortunately, it has become yet another failure on the government's record.

● (1045)

This is the failure of the Minister of Indigenous Services to properly administer Jordan's principle. Unfortunately, we are seeing that inequality continue under the government and the harms it is creating for the most vulnerable, especially children.

It is not just a matter of dollars and cents; it is a question of moral responsibility. Canada has a duty to right the wrongs of the past, to ensure that every child, no matter where they come from or what community they belong to, can live a healthy and fulfilling life. We know that when children have access to the right services at the right time, they grow up happier and more successful. We know early intervention can change the trajectory of a child's life, preventing lifelong illnesses and struggles, and setting them on a path of success.

Privilege

We, the opposition, are calling on the government to fulfill its responsibility, to fully implement Jordan's principle, to stand up for what Canada has a duty to provide, to ensure no indigenous child is denied access to the services they need. It is not just an indigenous issue; it is a Canadian issue. Every child in this country, I think we all agree, should be able to access the same opportunities, the same services, the same care, regardless of their background or where they live. Jordan's principle, as I said earlier, is a step toward making this a reality, but we need the government to do its part.

It is time for the Minister of Indigenous Services to act clearly to immediately ensure every indigenous child receives the care, support and services they need to succeed, or to step aside and let someone else do it. We on this side of the House are prepared to do that. We need to stand up for those children who have been left behind for far too long. Let us hold the government accountable. Let the House demand that it live up to the promises of Jordan's principle.

These children are the future of our country and we cannot continue to fail them. The failure to properly administer Jordan's principle and the green slush fund scandal, as I mentioned right off the top, are more than isolated incidents. In a previous speech, I went through, one by one, the various scandals the government has managed to jump itself into, and the erosion of public trust in the government and in our institutions because of the actions the government has taken. When Canadians see their hard-earned dollars squandered on waste, fraud and abuse, they start to lose faith in the ability of their government to act in their best interests.

The green slush fund raises concerns about the effectiveness of the Liberal approach: focusing more on political manoeuvring and less on actual, tangible solutions. Canadians' frustration with the government continues to grow. Time is running out for the government. Many people are calling for change, for an election. Many people want to see their country start to thrive again, to make products here at home, to create jobs, to create opportunity and wealth, all of which have been slowly fading away because of the policies of the Liberal government.

Hopefully, the government will see that it is time to put its ideas to the test and perhaps even implement some of our ideas. We have talked about how taking the tax off new homes could start to create that ability for first-time homebuyers to get into the home ownership market. We have talked about axing the tax, fixing the budget and stopping the crime. We hope to do that very soon, if given the opportunity by Canadians after the next election.

I appreciate the opportunity and I look forward to the questions ahead.

• (1050)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently had a chance to substitute onto the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for the study of Bill C-61 and I appreciated sitting with the hon. member, whose interventions were quite thoughtful. In his speech, he mentioned the need to improve the competitive environment, to improve competition. That is exactly what the government did through Bill C-59. Those changes were, in many ways, aimed at increasing competition in the grocery sector.

I would like to know what the member thinks of those changes in Bill C-59. If he liked them, why did he and his party vote against it?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words from the member opposite. We did have a good working relationship on Bill C-61. I thought there was a lot of good discussion as we moved through that piece of legislation. It was good to see the member come from a different committee and add a bit of a different perspective. That is always appreciated.

In terms of his question, I think, overall, competitiveness is lacking in this country. If we look at where investment is and where it is not, that becomes very clear. We continue to have more lumber mills in British Columbia start to close, and small towns being deeply affected by the mills closing. We have indigenous communities that have interests in lumber mills that are not able to move their product because of the competitiveness, the lack of a softwood lumber agreement. It goes on to oil and gas, to mining and so on. This country is just not as competitive. It is unfortunate, because we have the resources to do that.

• (1055)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was Jolynn Winter and Chantel Fox, age 12, who died in Wapekeka First Nation, that changed how Jordan's principle was supposed to be administered because the community was begging for support to stop a suicide crisis. That report sat on the bureaucrat's desk and nothing was done.

The Human Rights Tribunal ruled that Canada could no longer refuse to turn around Jordan's principle, because children were dying. Unfortunately, we see a situation that was started under Stephen Harper, the millions he spent against Jordan's principle. The spying he did against Cindy Blackstock, who was the champion of Jordan's principle, was carried on by the Liberals. What the Liberals have learned is that they cannot defy the courts. They can just let the system continue to do what it has always done, which is to deny rights by ignoring them. Children are continuing to die. The system is not broken, my friend; this is how it was built. It was built by the likes of Stephen Harper and it has been continued by the government, and first nations children continue to suffer.

The idea that this guy who lives in Stornoway, who ridiculed residential school survivors, will actually do something for indigenous children is a whopper that I do not think anyone is going to believe.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, as the member for Carleton, our leader, said in July, the Conservative government, if given a chance to serve, would fully fund and implement Jordan's principle because indigenous children should have equal access to care and supports when they need it, where they need it, no matter where they live. That is something I agree with and I fully support our leader.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the need to reduce taxes and also mentioned investment. Due to the actions of the government, inflation has now come down to 2%. The Bank of Canada has reduced the interest rate for the fifth time, to 3.25%. There is still some pain among Canadians with the cost of living, hence the government has taken measures. I have two questions for the member.

First, when he talks about the need to reduce taxes, why is he not supporting the government measure to eliminate GST on certain items for the next two months?

Second, he talked about investments. Why does he not recognize that Canada has attracted the best foreign direct investment per capita among all the OECD countries? Does it not show the confidence that the international corporate world has in Canada?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite fairly well and I know he is a very smart individual. I remind him that the inflation that has taken hold in Canada is baked into the prices we are seeing now. It is not as if prices are actually going down. The prices of groceries are still absolutely insane, and we see that at the food banks, in record numbers. I do not think that is a measure of success that the government has really thought through, because when we are pushing people into food banks, that is not a good thing.

In terms of the interest rate cut, again, I do not think that is the flex the government thinks it is. I think there are deep concerns about the economy, and I outlined that earlier in my speech.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know foreign interference is a very serious issue in Canada. We can think of extortion, murder and political interference, all done through foreign interference. Now we know that at the leadership convention at which the current leader of the Conservative Party was elected, there was foreign interference with respect to that leadership.

One of the Conservative leadership candidates came before committee and virtually affirmed that foreign interference was a part of the Conservative leadership convention. In fact, a current member of the Conservative Party, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, is someone who has been influenced by foreign interference.

Why do the Conservatives not recognize today that foreign interference is an issue, as they did last year when they were popping all over the place? Why does the leader of the Conservative Party not get the security clearance?

Some hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I know we all try our best during Statements by Members to pay attention to what is going on and keep the noise down to a minimum.

Statements by Members

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

* * *

ORGAN DONATION

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2023, there were 3,428 organ transplants performed in Canada, with 184 of them being heart transplants. There were 132 people awaiting a heart transplant and 13 people passed away while waiting for a donor in 2023.

The data for 2024 is not out yet, but thanks to a donor, my sister Ann will be one of this year's statistics for individuals who received a heart transplant. On January 9, the transplant team, coordinated by Grant Fisher at University Hospital, saved my sister's life.

On behalf of my family, I would like to thank the following people, who have made us all believe in miracles: the heart transplant team, with Dr. Smith, Dr. Davey and Dr. De; the fifth-floor cardiac ICU; the fourth-floor transplant ICU; physiotherapists Kristin Morris and Tracy Fuller; and social worker Heather Sadler. To the surgeon, Dr. Dave Nagpal, the team has changed our family's lives.

By August, my sister saw both her son and her daughter get married, and soon, Ann will be able to watch her granddaughter, Collins, meet her new cousin. None of this would have been possible if it was not for a donor.

To Ann's heart donor, and to their family, I thank them so much. Anyone can be a donor. Please give the gift of life.

* * *

GEORGIA

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of the country of Georgia are courageously fighting for their freedom, democracy and a European future. Tens of thousands are protesting peacefully despite facing intimidation, violence and mass arrests.

In the last two weeks, 500 individuals have been detained, with 70% reporting ill treatment, and over 80 required hospitalization, yet no accountability has been demanded from those responsible for the excessive force. The government is escalating its crack-down, targeting activists at their homes and violating their rights. The ruling Georgian Dream party is proposing amendments to Georgia's law on assemblies that would further restrict peaceful protest.

We stand in solidarity with the Georgian people in their fight for human rights and democracy. I call for the immediate release of all detained activists and accountability for abuses. As we celebrate international Human Rights Day, we applaud the courage of the Georgian people.

*Statements by Members***GURDEV SINGH GILL**

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to reflect on the remarkable life and work of Dr. Gurdev Singh Gill. His passing was a devastating loss and my thoughts are with his wife Jasinder, his daughter Jasmine, his son Sanjy and their families.

Dr. Gill immigrated to Canada in 1949 and soon after graduated from the UBC medical program. He became the first Canadian of South Asian origin to practise medicine and was awarded the Order of B.C. He has been described as a pioneer and a role model who showed both adults and children that with passion and determination, they could achieve anything.

His advocacy for aspiring Indo-Canadian medical professionals and his efforts to improve health care access for immigrants set him apart. Dr. Gill also had a lasting impact in Punjab, India. He founded the Indo-Canadian Friendship Society of B.C., improving clean drinking water, sanitation and infrastructure for over 100,000 people in India. His legacy reminds us of the power we all have to improve the lives of those around us.

Rest in peace, Dr. Gill.

* * *

● (1105)

CHRISTMAS

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we stand on the threshold of this holy season, I want to wish all those celebrating in Don Valley West and around the world a very happy Christmas.

The promise of Christmas is that love can and will break through all of the cynicism, disappointment, pain and despair that continues to this day, long after Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine. Christmas did not happen just once. It happens every time someone lights a candle to make the way a little easier for another person. It happens every time someone welcomes a refugee or a broken person into their community. It happens every time we lift another person up, giving them more love, more hope and more success.

Christmas is a hard time for many. This Christmas welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, give hope to the lost. Let us make Christmas happen again.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' elastic deficit is causing tension between the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Should the inflationary deficit be increased to \$46 billion or \$40 billion? That is the question.

The Conservative Party believes the answer is simple: Stop the planned tax hikes by axing the carbon tax, stop fuelling inflation by cutting unnecessary inflationary spending, and stop adding to the debt by implementing a dollar-for-dollar law.

Instead, The Globe and Mail reported this week that the Prime Minister was plotting his next sleight of hand by replacing the fi-

nance minister with his good friend, the unelected Mark Carney. The Prime Minister has been churning through one finance minister after another, hoping to justify his disastrous policies, but Canadians are not fooled.

We are only asking the Liberals to do one thing: just stop.

* * *

[*English*]

KINGSTON VACCINATION CLINICS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2021, as COVID-19 cases surged in Kingston, Dr. Elaine Ma coordinated innovative drive-through vaccine clinics that were crucial for our community's health at a time of great uncertainty. Collaborating with health care professionals, Queen's University students, the public health unit and volunteers, Dr. Ma was widely recognized for her heroic efforts in vaccinating thousands of people throughout the Kingston region.

Now, years later, OHIP is demanding that Dr. Ma repay billed costs based on technicalities related to the distribution of those vaccines. OHIP has seemingly forgotten the dire and urgent circumstances of the pandemic that required innovative solutions from health care professionals like Dr. Ma.

Today, I am calling on Premier Doug Ford, his Minister of Health and OHIP to drop this nonsense claim against Dr. Ma and start acknowledging and celebrating the heroic efforts of our health care providers during and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

* * *

PATRICIA ROSE "GAIL" CYR

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a beloved northerner and a friend who passed away last week. Patricia Rose Cyr, better known as Gail, was a former Yellowknife city councillor for a decade and worked tirelessly for the advancement of indigenous people. Gail had a passion for justice and was a strong advocate for women.

In recognition for her lifetime of dedication to helping others, she was a recipient of the Order of Canada in 2021. She leaves behind an incredible legacy.

My condolences to her family and loved ones at this difficult time. We are going to miss her.

Mahsi cho.

*Statements by Members***FINANCE**

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, groceries, gas and home heating are getting more expensive, and a two-month tax trick is nothing but a lump of coal in Canadians' Christmas stockings.

As we await the fall economic statement, the finance minister has to worry about carbon tax Carney breathing down her neck as the Prime Minister tries his best to entice him to take over for her.

Liberal tensions on deficit spending are said to be causing this internal Christmas conflict, but common-sense Conservatives can offer some advice to help: just stop. Stop all planned tax hikes, especially the job-killing carbon tax hikes. Stop fuelling inflation by cutting wasteful spending and axing the sales tax on new homes. Stop adding debt by confirming that the deficit has not crashed through the \$40-billion guardrail the finance minister promised.

Canadians need the reckless, wasteful and incompetent NDP-Liberal government to stop, so we can start a carbon tax election and bring the common-sense solutions Canadians need and deserve.

* * *

● (1110)

[Translation]

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House to announce that the Christmas spirit is alive and well in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. From the food banks where volunteers spend countless hours ensuring that families in need have plenty to eat this Christmas, to the optimist clubs that are taking pains to make sure that kids who would otherwise go without get a Christmas present, our volunteers have their hearts in the right place.

Since this is my last chance to send out Christmas wishes from the House, I would like to wish a merry Christmas to my father Yves, my mother Nicole, my brother Mathieu and his kids and, of course, to my wife Kate and my son Léo-Xavier.

[English]

Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Speaker, to all my colleagues in this chamber and, obviously, to the staff who make us look smart.

[Translation]

Merry Christmas to my riding assistants Louise, Lynne and Carole, and to my parliamentary assistants in Ottawa, Trevor, Ian, Hugo and Emma. Merry Christmas and a happy new year to all my constituents. I hope everyone gets to spend time with family and friends over the holidays.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week, Canadians will learn of the Liberal government's complete failure to keep the country's finances in check, just one day before

the Liberals try to run and hide from a fiscal fiasco of their own making.

New reports suggest things are so bad behind closed doors that the Prime Minister is going to give the boot to yet another woman in his cabinet in his latest desperate attempt to save his own skin. This time, the finance minister will once again be blamed and take the fall for crashing Canada's economy because the Prime Minister cannot help himself, just like he did with the first female indigenous justice minister some years ago.

Before any more damage can be done, Conservatives are demanding three simple things from whoever seems to be in charge on that side: just stop. Stop all the planned Liberal tax hikes, especially the quadrupling of the carbon tax. Stop inflationary spending. Stop adding more debt to our withering economy.

If the languishing Liberal government cannot or will not listen to these simple demands, common-sense Conservatives would fix what the NDP-Liberals broke in a carbon tax election.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, spending has gotten so bad that even Liberals are concerned. The finance minister promised Canadians that the deficit would not be a penny over \$40 billion. She promised that it would be her fiscal guardrail. When someone goes over a guardrail, they do not stop. They go right over into the abyss.

The problem is so bad that even Liberals are commenting. "I think that we do need to show fiscal restraint", said one of them. Another Liberal said this: "I think that if we state that we have a \$40 billion guardrail, we stay within those numbers".

To save our skin from the phantom finance minister, conflict of interest carbon tax Carney, the current finance minister has begun selling furniture in order to pay the rent. Liberals just sold three billion dollars' worth of Air Canada stock in the last 48 hours. Desperate Liberals will do anything to save their sinking ship.

The solution is simple. They should just stop. Stop increasing spending, stop increasing taxes, stop increasing inflation and call a carbon tax election.

*Statements by Members***GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been one year since the Liberal government launched the Canada dental care plan. The results are nothing short of remarkable. In just 12 months, three million Canadians have been approved for coverage, and over 1.2 million people have access to affordable dental care in all our communities across Canada. That is 1.2 million brighter smiles, 1.2 million healthier families and 1.2 million reasons to celebrate.

Talking about reasons to celebrate, tomorrow we are cutting GST on all essential goods. We are talking about food, children's clothes and toys, books, beer and wine. That's cutting sales tax for two months to help Canadians.

We are just getting started. Our government will continue to stand by Canadians, breaking down barriers and ensuring access to the help they need. Let us keep the momentum going and help Canada shine brighter, one smile at a time.

* * *

CANADA POST STRIKE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal labour minister has intervened in the negotiation process and ordered the CUPW members back to work, similar to what the government has done in the past under the Conservatives. Not respecting the bargaining process led to this in the very first place. No one makes the decision to go on strike lightly, especially as the holidays approach. This was the result of decades of disrespect and disregard.

Postal workers are crucial for our communities, often having to work late into the night. They do more than mail delivery; they keep us connected and our streets safe. Their absence during the strike has been deeply felt by all, proving their value for our present and our future. While Canada Post CEO Doug Ettinger makes half a million dollars per year and executives earn easily over six figures, our dedicated postal workers are simply asking for a fair deal and safe working conditions.

Postal workers across Canada should know that I and New Democrats stand with them. Undermining the bargaining process comes at their expense, the public's expense and the expense of a successful future for Canada Post, which provides a key service in a functioning democracy and successful economy.

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● (1115)

[Translation]

ACADIAN REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this cold day, December 13, imagine being forced, at gunpoint, out of your home and onto a ship, only to realize in horror that it would become your grave at the bottom of the icy Atlantic.

That is what happened on December 13, 1758, to some 850 Acadians, 850 innocent people who evince the cruelty of the deportation of this proud people, ordered by the British Crown.

Nearly 12,000 Acadians were deported during what became euphemistically known as the Great Upheaval. Many of them died before reaching their destination, from either illness or deprivation.

On this Acadian Remembrance Day, let us honour the memory of those who were lost but, more importantly, let us underscore the failure of this intractable attempt to wipe out a people, which constitutes a crime against humanity.

The fact of the matter is that British authorities failed. The Acadian people continue to thrive, proudly and strong, on their ancestral lands, as they do in many other places, including Quebec, where my own ancestors found refuge.

The Deputy Speaker: Long live Acadia.

[English]

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

* * *

FINANCE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are set to crash through their so-called \$40-billion deficit guardrail, which will add to Canada's already sky-high debt.

Incredibly, the fake feminist Prime Minister is going to blame this on the finance minister, setting up her firing in order to replace her with conflict of interest carbon tax Carney. The finance minister admitted that deficits cause inflation and promised she would cap the deficit at \$40 billion and not go a penny over. Despite this, the Prime Minister came along and is forcing her into spending more.

The fake feminist Prime Minister has been working overtime behind the scenes to fire Canada's first female finance minister and bring in his guy, carbon tax Carney, conflict of interest Carney. This is an insult, especially when he stated just a few days ago that, "I am and always will be a proud feminist".

Canadians deserve better than that, and the incompetent Prime Minister is forcing the finance minister into blowing through an already crazy \$40-billion deficit.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader is very good at coming up with slogans on cutting taxes. Unfortunately, he is not very good at acting on what he says.

Oral Questions

We would think that the Conservative caucus would be the first to support a GST tax credit, a tax credit that puts real money back into the pockets of Canadians, but it did not. The Conservative leader whipped them into voting against a tax credit for Canadians. Canadians deserve a leader that backs words with actions, not empty rhetoric and performative outrage.

The Liberal government is delivering real affordability measures for families, while the Conservatives are busy voting against solutions for Canadians. Liberals have cut taxes where it matters, whether for the middle class or small business, while the Conservatives continue cutting their credibility.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister has lost control of spending and he has lost control of his own cabinet. The outgoing finance minister promised that a massive \$40-billion deficit would be her fiscal guardrail, but it looks like the Prime Minister and the incoming finance minister, carbon tax Carney, are pushing her through the guardrail and over the fiscal cliff with the rest of Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister stand up today and admit that he is having his outgoing finance minister take the fall so that he can replace her with carbon tax Carney?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are trying to distract from their voting record. In this House of Commons, when this government put forward legislation, affirmed last night by the Senate, to cut GST for families looking to buy kids' clothes, diapers and car seats; wanting to go out to a restaurant; or wanting to buy beer or cider, the Conservatives were against that. They have lots of slogans when it comes to cutting taxes, but that is all they have: empty slogans. When it comes down to it, we put a tax cut forward and they voted against it.

• (1120)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a tiny two-month tax trick is not going to help the more than two million Canadians lined up at food banks every month, nor will pennies off Pepsi help Canadians who are going to pay \$800 more for groceries in 2025. This Prime Minister is forcing his outgoing finance minister to take the fall for the effects of his inflationary spending that is pushing right past his \$40-billion deficit guardrail and over the cliff. Will the Prime Minister admit that it is in fact his inflationary spending that is the cause of this massive deficit?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the lowest debt and deficit in the G7 and a fifth consecutive interest rate decline are good news for business owners looking to expand. They are good news for mortgage holders looking to re-

new and families looking to buy a home, and there are many other examples. The Conservatives want to distract from their record. In fact, let us think about the Harper years. Stephen Harper had the worst rate of economic growth going back to R.B. Bennett in the 1930s. They are not serious about these things.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is talking about good news like Canadians have never had it so good. We have the highest household debt, because Canadians cannot afford to pay their mortgages. They cannot afford to feed themselves. They cannot afford to heat their homes or put gas in their cars after nine years of this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister who said that the budget would balance itself, that he does not think about monetary policy and that it should be the bankers who worry about the economy. Even his caucus is calling for some fiscal sanity after nine years of his economic vandalism. When the deficit smashes through \$40 billion, will the Prime Minister at least allow his caucus—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about people at food banks. We are not insensitive to that. Canadians have had a hard time. What has this government done? We have supported them through the pandemic. We continue to show support. The Conservatives want to cut Canadians' pensions; they want to cut employment insurance. We have a school food program that is supporting no fewer than 400,000 kids in four different provinces. The Conservatives voted against that too. With the Canada child benefit, today parents will see a direct deposit put into their account. The Conservatives are also against that. They do not care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “deficit” is a short word with only three syllables. It is easy to pronounce. Not only do the Liberals seem incapable of saying it, but they are afraid to even talk about it, because they have lost control. The Minister of Finance said she put in a guardrail to ensure that the deficit did not exceed \$40 billion.

Why did the Prime Minister choose to listen to the advice of his old chum, Mark Carney, and force Canada's first female finance minister to break her promise and her \$40-billion guardrail?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see that Scrooge is in town.

Tomorrow morning, Canadians and Quebeckers will have a GST holiday. That is good news.

Oral Questions

After hammering away for a year about us needing to lower taxes, what did the Conservatives say? They just stayed in their seats.

We have stepped up. Tomorrow morning, people will have a GST holiday on diapers. They will be able to go to a restaurant and save money. That is what it means to side with Canadians. That is affordability.

The Conservatives have nothing to say about it.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the word “deficit”. My question is about the deficit. That should not be too hard to grasp.

Why did the Prime Minister force Canada's first female Minister of Finance to go over her \$40-billion guardrail, dragging all Canadians down with her, while he and his friend Mark Carney stood by and watched her fall? What hypocrisy from a Prime Minister who said, just this week, “I want you to know that I am, and always will be, a proud feminist.”

Let me try this again. Does the Prime Minister have the courage to say the word “deficit”, and why is he forcing the finance minister to break her promise?

• (1125)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have read the Conservative Party's economic statement. Their plan is to fix the budget, and then it is a big blank page. The Conservatives have nothing to say about the economy.

Quebeckers and Canadians across the country are getting a GST holiday as of tomorrow morning. That is good news. My colleague had a chance to stand up for his constituents. What did he do? He just sat there. As a result, he will have to tell his constituents that, instead of voting for a GST break, he stood up to keep their taxes higher. That is shameful.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again yesterday, senators conspired to delay a crucial vote on Bill C-282, which would protect supply management. They have been working against our farmers for 18 months by putting off passing this one-clause bill.

Rather than respecting the will of elected members of all parties, unelected senators are filibustering. Ironically, the delay tactics that senators used yesterday consisted in stopping work by taking four hours of paid breaks.

Will the government condemn that sorry spectacle?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member opposite. It is shameful what Conservative members did in the House. It is important to remember that nearly 50% of Conservative members voted against Bill C-282. Now, the House has spoken. We support Bill C-282. We did our job.

We have made many calls to senators, and I encourage the member to continue making calls to the other chamber, because we expect Bill C-282 to be passed.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appeal to all the party leaders. Every one of them voted to protect supply management in trade agreements. Today, they have a duty to ask senators to respect the will of elected members. They must tell the senators, who are not elected, that they are not being paid to take a break, that they have a job to do no matter how superfluous it may be.

The Senate overlords are sitting again next week. Will all the leaders, starting with the Prime Minister, ask them to pass Bill C-282 before the holidays?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for several months now, I have heard the Prime Minister repeatedly encourage the other place to pass Bill C-282.

However, I have not heard that from the leader of the Conservative Party. I understand the reason: The issue is a divisive one on the other side of the House. Almost 50% of Conservatives voted against supply management. Every member on our side of the House voted for it. We expect the other chamber to respect the decision of the House of Commons.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budgetary Officer revealed yesterday that over two million Canadians do not have access to adequate or affordable housing. This is no surprise. Average rents now in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia for a one-bedroom are over \$2,500 a month. It is staggering. Liberals have simply been too weak to take on the corporate greed that is fuelling housing prices and Conservatives, of course, will just make their corporate landlord buddies and developer buddies richer.

When will the government take on the corporate greed that is fuelling housing prices, so that all Canadians can have a roof over their head?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, what the Parliamentary Budgetary Officer's report revealed is that this federal government, for the first time in decades, is back in housing, making it a serious priority, reversing decades of cuts from previous governments; in particular, with all due respect, from Conservative governments.

The reality is that we have more work to do. However, we have seen through vital programs, which would be cut by that party, like the reaching home program, that 87,000 people have been lifted off the street and almost 150,000 people who would be homeless are not homeless because of our strategy on that. We will continue.

Oral Questions

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, temperatures are plunging in northern Canada and the ongoing housing crisis on northern reserves is putting families and children at serious risk. Carol-Ann Ballantyne lives in a mouldy trailer with three children in Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. For years she has pleaded just for a simple home to keep her children safe and warm, but to the Liberals, she is just another name on an ever-growing backlog of heartbreak and homelessness in the north, a crisis they continue to ignore.

I have simple question: Why is the government refusing to help this family? Why is it refusing to step up and deal with this crisis?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working since 2015 on creating partnerships with provinces, territories and indigenous leaders to get more houses built all over the north. Several years ago, we invested \$4 billion in distinctions-based housing to get construction done. Last year, there was another \$4 billion for an urban-rural northern housing reserve. We are going in the right direction and there is still lots of work to do.

* * *

• (1130)

FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, carbon tax Carney's Canadian comeback fuelled a fiscal feud for this furious finance minister. The Prime Minister forced the finance minister to crash through the \$40-billion deficit guardrail promise. The PBO says it will be at least over \$6 billion. Now that the Prime Minister is done using her, he will dump her for carbon tax Carney.

Will the Prime Minister confirm, once he fires his finance minister, that the deficit will not be a penny over \$46 billion?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while that member practises on things that rhyme with F-words, our minister actually renegotiated NAFTA with Trump. Our minister introduced supports during a global pandemic to keep businesses and people going. Our minister, tomorrow, will see GST tax breaks for Canadians.

So, while Conservatives practise their rhymes, we are delivering real supports for Canadians.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' minister is the reason that Canada's economy is crapping out. Just to take dimes off Doritos, they will crash the deficit guardrail, taking Canada's finances off a cliff. The Prime Minister forced the finance minister to implement it. The PBO confirmed that they are already \$6 billion past that fiscal guardrail.

Canadians want to know how bad carbon tax Carney and the Prime Minister will smash through the \$40-billion deficit guardrail. How bad is it? What is the deficit number?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear that when the Conservatives have no real argument or debate, they just insult people.

On this side of the House, our finance minister has a record of helping people in some of the hardest times this country has ever faced: a global pandemic, global inflation. We saw another interest rate cut just this week, and tomorrow we will see more tax breaks for Canadians, something Conservatives promised they would do, but were not able to.

So, what is it? Is it the fact that it is our plan that we are actually implementing, or that they cannot stand a woman doing it?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We made it to 12 questions before we got too much noise in here, which is not bad. It is a record, I am sure.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consensus among economists, experts and even the Parliamentary Budget Officer is that this government has exceeded all of its fiscal anchors. The only question is: How badly has it failed?

Can the government confirm whether the Minister of Finance has gone way past the guardrail, or completely off the cliff, with a \$46-billion deficit?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should expand beyond the Fraser Institute and look to, for example, what the International Monetary Fund has said, what other lead financial authorities have said in the business press and elsewhere, as well as the Parliamentary Budget Officer, which is that Canada has a very sustainable fiscal situation, with the lowest debt in the G7, the lowest deficit in the G7 and an AAA credit rating.

What do we see on the Conservative side? It is a plan to make cuts, including a plan to cut \$10 million for housing in Peterborough, the member's community. What does he have to say to that?

Oral Questions

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us return to the facts here. The current and former governors of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem and Stephen Poloz, agree: The Canadian economy is in big trouble. The phantom finance minister's economic plan is failing Canadians. The sad part is that these Liberals do not even know how badly. Can someone go behind the curtain on the other side and simply ask carbon tax Carney what the deficit is?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that this member is an honourable member, and I know that he cares about his community. A few weeks ago, I spoke with Peterborough's Mayor Jeff Leal, who is a good man. He cares about his community and is doing a great job in that city. I told him of the government's plan to invest over \$10 million, through the housing accelerator fund, to build more housing. The Conservatives want to cut that investment, among others. Will the member join the other Conservative MPs who are advocating for the accelerator fund to ensure that more homes get built? I hope that he does; the mayor is asking.

• (1135)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has lost control of his spending and his cabinet. The PBO says that this year's budget deficit could be as high as \$46 billion, smashing the \$40-billion guardrail promised by the finance minister. Like so many ministers before her, the finance minister's time might be limited, simply for standing up to the Prime Minister and his radical agenda.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that he is ignoring his finance minister's \$40-billion guardrail promise and tell us whether the deficit will exceed \$46 billion?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout today, the Conservatives have launched personal attacks on the finance minister, who is responsible for, among other things, the Canada child benefit and who is responsible for, among other things, ensuring that child care is a priority in this country, moving toward \$10 a day. What has that done for this country's economy? Among other things, 110,000 women have been able to re-enter the workforce because child care has now moved to an affordable level.

The Conservatives want to cancel that. They say all these things about families, but, in the end, they do not care about families.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from that answer, it is clear that the Liberals have abandoned all hope of keeping their \$40-billion guardrail promise that was made to Canadians. While the unelected, unaccountable and phantom finance minister, carbon tax Carney, pulls the strings from the shadows, the Liberals are following their Prime Minister and the economy of Canada right off the fiscal cliff. Already, interest charges on our debt will cost taxpayers more than the feds send to the provinces in health care transfers.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that the deficit will not be over \$46 billion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is some really good news. Last night, the Senate of Canada passed the legislation that is going to give a GST tax break starting tomorrow for all Canadians in all regions of the country. That is actually good news. It is something the Conservatives campaigned on, but oops, they voted against it.

The Conservatives are the grinch of Christmas, whereas we are giving a tax break during the holiday season. That is good news.

* * *

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, time is running out for Lion Electric, and the federal government must play its part.

Lion Electric has until December 16 to reach an agreement with its creditors. That is this coming Monday. Today, the federal government must send a clear message to investors that all the conditions are in place to restart Lion Electric's orders. It must immediately announce to potential buyers of electric buses that they will receive the much-touted subsidy provided for in the zero emission transit fund.

Will Ottawa finally get moving?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the province. We will continue to work with investors. We are going to make sure we do everything we can, because this industry is the future of Canada, the future of Quebec.

We absolutely want this to work.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear a yes.

The employees at Lion Electric deserve better than that from the federal government. There are three days left to save the Quebec flagship of electric transportation. The investors, the cities involved, the Government of Quebec; everyone is fighting to save Lion Electric in Quebec. In the meantime, there is just Ottawa who is asleep at the switch.

The federal government must grant the full subsidies to the potential clients of Lion Electric. That is its role. It must do so right away, not when the flagship is gone.

Will the government wake up?

Oral Questions

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through the zero emission transit fund, the federal government is helping the public transit and school bus operators in the country electrify their fleet. This initiative builds on the work of the Canada Infrastructure Bank to provide to public transit and school bus operators low-cost loans for electrification. Through these two initiatives, the federal government is supporting the acquisition of more than 5,000 new electric buses across the country.

We will continue to do this work. We want to save these jobs.

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[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$40 billion was a guardrail set by the Liberal finance minister. Listen to this: “not an unlimited pot”, “need to show fiscal restraint”, and “if...we have a \$40-billion guardrail...stay [there]”. That is not Stephen Harper; it is Liberal members of Parliament.

If the deficit is over the \$40-billion guardrail, will the Prime Minister allow a free vote for his NDP-Liberals?

• (1140)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are very fond of quoting from the Parliamentary Budget Officer; it is their right. They can go one step further and actually look at what he recently said on the country's finances: We have a more than sustainable fiscal situation. If it were up to the Conservatives, that would reverse.

We know what the Conservative record is when it comes to running up deficits, but more importantly, to the point that has been raised, because they talk about families, what programs would they cut? They talk about the idea of fixing the budget. For them that means cutting, and they would cut dental care, pharma care, support for families across the board and pensions. They are not serious.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about what could be more than \$40 billion; a carbon-taxing, coal-loving Carney; a finance minister on the run; and a Prime Minister not into monetary policy. The Liberals hike taxes, fuel inflation and crash through the fiscal guardrails and off the cliff.

The government is a chaotic clown show. Which one of them will call a carbon tax election?

The Deputy Speaker: I ask everybody to watch the words they use.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives dive into insults because they actually have no plan for the economy. I think they just cannot stand the fact that we have a finance minister who was able to renegotiate NAFTA with

the previous Trump administration, we were able to see supports being delivered to businesses and Canadians through the worst global pandemic, we continue to see interest rates drop, and tomorrow we will see a tax break for all Canadians.

While the Conservatives want to know about a free vote, I am wondering whether they will have a free question.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has lost control of the public purse and of his ministers. The squabble has to do with the massive deficit. The Prime Minister is forcing his Minister of Finance to add another \$6 billion to the government's credit card to try to win votes.

The Minister of Finance was forced to break her promise not to exceed her already irresponsible deficit of \$40 billion.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that the deficit will not exceed \$46 billion?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, in my riding, Fondation Rock Guertin is distributing Christmas hampers. I would like to thank all of the volunteers and the executive director, Solange, for the work that they do.

When I meet with them, they always remind me of how important the Canada child benefit is for the families they serve. This benefit can provide up to \$7,800 per child. The Conservatives would do away with this vital support that was put in place by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. After nine years of this Liberal government and nine consecutive deficits, Canada's debt has more than doubled. Even the Minister of Finance is at odds with the Prime Minister because it is so irresponsible.

To clean up the mess, the Prime Minister is quietly grooming a successor, the radical Mark Carney. He has been pulling the strings for too long with the carbon tax and monster deficits.

Is the finance minister just living out her final days before being replaced by Mark Carney, the Prime Minister's close buddy?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers in my riding who help those in need.

Oral Questions

I also thank the Deputy Prime Minister for making this important gesture and giving us a GST holiday, a measure the Conservatives voted against. I invite my colleague opposite to meet with his constituents over the holidays and tell them that his party voted against the GST relief measure intended to help those in need.

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[English]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, postal workers have been left without a fair deal for too long. They deserve safe working conditions, to retire with dignity, and livable wages. Now small businesses and everyday people are being hit hard, all because the Liberals refuse to do right by workers. As for the Conservatives, well, they do not care about workers; they protect CEOs like Canada Post's Doug Ettinger, padding his pockets while workers and communities struggle.

Why is the minister refusing to protect postal workers' rights to a fair deal?

● (1145)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we did respect and do respect workers' rights to negotiate a collective agreement. That is why the government has proposed, and I have proposed, a way forward where we can avoid the postal workers' being on picket lines for an untold and unknown amount of time, take a pause and have an independent, respected arbitrator look at the situation, propose a way forward and indeed ensure sustainability for Canada Post.

We will always be there for postal workers and other workers, and we need to make sure Canadians are well served in the process.

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HOUSING

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Port Alberni is short 1,200 homes. It is nearly impossible to find an affordable place to live. Rents doubled under the Conservatives and then again under the Liberals. Liberal disappointment and Conservative cuts mean that non-market housing in Canada has dropped to 3.5% of our housing stock. Other countries are doing much better, like France at 17%, the Netherlands at 34% and Denmark at 21%. Safe, secure and affordable housing saves lives.

When will the Liberal-Conservative coalition stop caving to rich investors and rapidly start building up Canada's non-market housing supply?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is right to talk about non-market housing. We do need more non-market housing options in this country. There has been, over the past few years, an enormous increase in exactly that. Eighty-seven thousand people who were on the street are now living in non-market housing. Close to 150,000 people who were going to be homeless have been housed as a result of the investments the current government has made.

We agree with the NDP that we need to do more, of course, but where we part company with the NDP is on the issue of market-based housing. We want to see more rental apartments for middle-income and lower-income Canadians. The NDP does not have a plan on that.

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TAXATION

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

Could the minister please educate the member opposite on what a tax break means for Canadians this holiday season?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me commend the member, who comes from a proud family that built up a successful small business. She understands what the tax cut means for small business owners and also for Canadians who want to see savings, especially during the holidays. It begins this Saturday and extends into February.

What we hear with the Conservatives is sloganeering. Their leader is not too worried; he has a \$2-million pension. He is not worried at all. Conservatives talk about tax cuts, but when it comes down to it, they are not in favour of them. They do not care.

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FINANCE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister admitted that deficits cause inflation. She promised she would cap Canada's deficit at an already crazy \$40 billion and would not go a penny over. Now the Prime Minister is pressuring her to spend even more, by pushing through her own guardrail and making her fall off a fiscal cliff.

Is the Prime Minister going to pressure the female finance minister to read conflict of interest, carbon tax Carney's fiscal update, and blame her for breaking the \$40-billion deficit promise?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that Canada has the lowest debt and deficit in the G7. The PBO is coming out and affirming that we have a very fiscally sustainable situation. What would the Conservatives do? They would make cuts.

In fact the member, with all due respect to her, ought to listen to what the mayor of Kelowna recently said. The Conservatives are proposing cuts for housing; this would mean less money for Kelowna. In fact he is worried that because of the prospective cuts, Kelowna would have to increase property taxes and go into the reserves.

The Conservative plan is a plan to increase property tax.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the fake feminist Prime Minister do this before, pushing strong women out of cabinet. The Prime Minister's hypocrisy is on display as he lectures about his being a proud feminist. The Globe and Mail reported on the Prime Minister's aggressive recruitment of conflict of interest, carbon tax Carney as tensions increased with the current finance minister.

Will the fake feminist Prime Minister park the hypocrisy and admit his inflationary spending is forcing the finance minister to break her \$40-billion deficit promise?

• (1150)

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we hear the word “feminist” being thrown around this place in the most disrespectful way, and it is rich that the Conservative Party claims to care about women. Maybe its members should stand up to their own leader, who contributes to the misogyny that increases hate towards women by embedding misogynistic hashtags into his YouTube videos. We will not take any lessons from the party across the aisle.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister actually admits that deficits cause inflation. She promised a cap of an already wacko \$40 billion, but the Prime Minister bullied to crash her through that so-called guardrail with billions more. He sets her up to take the fall, and Canadians will pay the price. Now, like he did with a long line of women, the Prime Minister kicks her to the curb, for his conflict of interest, carbon tax cronny Carney.

Is the Prime Minister really going to bully his female finance minister to read carbon tax Carney's fiscal update and then blame her for breaking the \$40-billion deficit promise?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a minister who stood up to Putin, who renegotiated trade deals with the U.S. and who worked to help Canadians get through a global health pandemic. She does not get bullied, but it seems that perhaps the Conservative caucus is projecting the fact that if they do not read the Conservative leader's lines, if they do not rhyme enough, they do not get question time. While we are working and are focused on providing tax relief to Canadians, Conservatives are making sure they rack up those gold stars.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know the Prime Minister says that women experience him differently, but it is his pattern to elbow them to the side. It is sad to see a woman spinning for him. He is incompetent and unaccountable; he bullies subordinate women, blames and shames them, then replaces them with his buddies. He has aggressively recruited carbon tax

Carney, yet calls himself a proud feminist. Canadians cannot afford this.

Will this completely weak fake stop all the hypocrisy and admit that his inflationary spending forces the finance minister to break her \$40-billion deficit promise?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives want to talk about feminism, here are some policies that our government has to support women across this country. There are such policies as \$10-a-day child care, which has thousands of women who have gone back to the workforce because they can now do so, and the national action plan to end gender-based violence, which is helping women get true freedom from those who would hurt them and harm them, true freedom and autonomy over our bodies. The Conservatives have opposed every single measure we have put forward to help women in this country, and they continue to do so.

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[Translation]

PASSPORTS

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, regarding the Canada Post strike, I want to express my solidarity with the workers and my hope that an agreement will be reached quickly.

This strike has proven once again the need for a 10-day passport pickup service in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, northern Quebec and the north shore. When time is short, our residents have only one option in all of Quebec: to drive six hours or more in the dead of winter to Gatineau or Montreal. All of the equipment required to provide this service, however, was delivered to the Service Canada centre in Rouyn-Noranda back in September 2023.

Christmas is coming. We are ready to supply him with the ribbon and bow. Can the minister act in good faith and open expedited service in Rouyn-Noranda?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interest in improving Service Canada.

Service Canada is currently working with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to assess every opportunity for expanding the services that are currently available. Locations are selected based on a number of criteria, including access, the demand for passports and demographics.

We are always looking for ways to improve service, and that is exactly what we are doing. As early as next Tuesday, we will be meeting with the minister to discuss this issue.

Oral Questions

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister had the nerve to tell me that, officially, 96% of Canadians have access to passport services within 10 business days and a half-hour drive from home. However, people in my region have to drive six hours or more. It is a two- or three-day trip, on top of all the fees they have to pay to get expedited service. In the middle of winter, dozens of people have to set out on the road to drive very long distances. It is unbelievable.

We have had confirmation that all the necessary equipment was delivered 15 months ago. Staff are in place, just waiting to be trained.

When will the Liberals stop jerking the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue around?

• (1155)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate the numbers my colleague just mentioned. Nearly 98% of Canadians have access. In addition, according to the figures from his riding, 92% of passports can be delivered in his riding within 20 business days.

Now, I would still urge everyone to plan ahead. Travel plans must be made beforehand, and passports should be applied for 20 days in advance in order to ensure that all requests can be fulfilled.

We continue to work with the member, with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and with Service Canada to improve services.

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[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, things are getting real bad behind closed doors for the languishing Liberal government. The Prime Minister is once again looking for someone to take the fall for his fiscal fiasco. This time, the Minister of Finance has been targeted for removal so that carbon tax Carney can come out from behind the shadows and replace her. Their \$40-billion so-called deficit guardrail looks as though it is about to be smashed through, sending our economy off the cliff.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise and confirm that the deficit will not be over \$40 billion?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see more personal attacks today. Under the Minister of Health and under the Minister of Finance, we have seen a national dental care program put in place. Three million-plus Canadians have signed on, and over a million have received care. Many are seniors. In fact, seniors were the first to be offered care.

Are the Conservatives saying that, as part of this big, bold idea, more of a slogan, in fact, to fix the budget, they would get rid of dental care? That is exactly what they would do. When it comes down to it, as I have said throughout today, they do not care. They care about slogans, but they do not care about Canadians.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister lost control of his caucus, just as he lost control of our economy, and the Liberal benches are clearing of people left to blame. It is not stopping the Liberal government from smashing through their own stated deficit guardrail, their fiscal anchor. Whatever they want to call it, the guardrail is about to be smashed. Canada's economy is careering off the cliff and sinking fast.

Will the Prime Minister please just stop drowning us in debt and confirm that next week's deficit will not shoot over \$40 billion and capsize Canada?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, children's clothes, diapers, car seats, board games, prepared food, snacks, video games and children's toys will all cost 13% less tomorrow in Ontario. This is thanks to the tax break on GST that our Liberal government brought forward. While the Conservatives sat down and voted against tax savings for Canadian families, we understand that this time of year is hard on families. We want to continue to be there to support them. If people are planning to take their family out for dinner, it will be 13% less in Ontario. That is what we will continue to do. We will continue supporting families in Ontario.

Starting tomorrow, there will be a tax break on GST for all families across Canada.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has lost control of spending and even his own cabinet. He is pushing his finance minister to smash through her \$40 billion deficit guardrail; all the while, reports indicate he is planning to fire her and replace her with carbon tax Carney.

Forty billion dollars would already be a massively irresponsible deficit, but the PBO says it could even go as high as \$46 billion. Will the Prime Minister confirm today that the deficit will not be a penny over \$46 billion?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we sit in this place and hear Conservatives ask the same question, written by their party leader, over and over again. That question has been asked and answered dozens of times in the House, so I have a question for my Conservative friends.

They seem very concerned about deficits. Can they offer one thing? Where are they going to start cutting? They should be specific.

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2022, one in four Canadians skipped a visit to the dentist because of cost. Thanks to our government's Canadian dental care plan, over 1.2 million Canadians have now received oral health care. Applications for the Canadian dental care plan launched one year ago; today, more than three million Canadians now have dental coverage.

Can the Minister of Health share how the CDCP is making life more affordable and helping Canadians access essential dental care?

• (1200)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has been such an advocate and a proponent of making sure everybody gets oral health. Could we have imagined, just a year ago, when we started taking applications for the Canada dental care plan, that in a year, three million Canadians would be covered? This means that virtually every senior who is eligible is covered and is able to get care. That is not just a matter of social justice, of somebody having a smile they are proud of or finally being able to get a pair of dentures in their mouth, but it is also a matter of prevention. When we make sure people get care, they do not get sick, we save money and we have a healthier society.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, bravo: They launched dental care just about the same time that they take the GST off chips, cookies and candies.

Liberal backbenchers have supported the Prime Minister through every scandal and every failed policy. Their deficit must be pretty bad if they are finally willing to remove the gag and start speaking out.

Will the Prime Minister at least listen to his own MPs and allow a free vote?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about health and what they are going to cut. They would take away diabetes medications for patients. They would take away contraception for women. They would take away oral health care for seniors.

What is going to happen? Let us talk about the implications. Canada has the second-longest health span in the G7; it is longer than that of Italy, France or the United Kingdom and six years longer than that of the United States. What they would do with these cuts is drive illness, which will drive cost and is just plain dumb. If we want to make sure that we get health care right, it is also at the core of a strong economy and reducing costs.

It is time Conservatives woke up and stood up for health care in this country.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fundamental rule of Parliament is that no money shall be spent without the consent of Parliament. It is right in the Constitution. Members might want to take a look.

It has been eight months since the year-end, and the Liberals still have not tabled the deficit number. The Liberals are two months late in tabling the public accounts. Bay Street, not Parliament, learned yesterday that the government has sold \$3 billion of Air Canada shares. They are blocking Parliament from doing its work.

Oral Questions

They must have blown by their maximum \$40 billion deficit promise massively.

They should come clean: What is the deficit number?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that, during the pandemic, the government provided loan support and other support for Air Canada to ensure its long-term viability. Part of that was buying shares in the company. It was never, though, the intention of the Government of Canada to hold on to those shares into the long term.

It made a sale yesterday, and it was a responsible one. Again, the question has been asked. The Minister of Health put it forward and the Minister of Labour put it forward. What would the Conservatives cut? What would they cut to ensure that the budget is, as they say, fixed? The Conservatives would cut dental care, child care and pharmacare supports. They do not care.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Minister of Labour stepped into the Canada Post strike. The workers' union said that it “denounces in the strongest terms this assault on our constitutionally protected [rights]”.

Even the NDP leader said the Liberals will “always step in to make sure the unions have no power.”

On Monday, the NDP leader put his pension before country and workers, voting confidence in the Liberals. Will the government confirm it has ordered workers back to work? What is the price the Liberals paid to keep the NDP leader propping up this anti-worker government?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we acted decisively today to offer a creative solution to the labour dispute between Canada Post and its workers. That constitutionally protected right to strike has been exercised for four weeks. If workers were not to be on picket lines for some indefinite period over the holidays, a solution had to be brought.

We work for all Canadians in the House. Canadians were suffering. Small businesses were suffering. Indigenous and remote regions were suffering. The government had to act, and that is what I did this morning.

*Routine Proceedings***TAXATION**

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is bringing real tax relief to Canadians. Tomorrow, December 14, Canadians can celebrate the holidays without having to worry about the extra cost of the GST. This is a big help for Canadians across the country, who will be able to keep more of their hard-earned money.

However, Conservative MPs voted against this tax cut. Could the minister explain to my constituents how this measure can alleviate their tax anxieties during the holiday season?

• (1205)

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler for that question and for her dedicated service.

Our government believes that when Canadians need a helping hand, the government must be there. That is why, starting tomorrow, we are giving Canadians a tax break, putting more money in their pockets. This means that essentials, such as groceries, snacks, kids' clothing and diapers are all tax-free. It means Canadians can focus on this very special time of year, on the holidays, spending time with family and friends, and worry less about family budgets.

This holiday season is not a time to play politics; it is a time to deliver for Canadians.

Ms. Leila Dance (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' short-term GST holiday is creating too much confusion for small businesses across this country. This botched plan is adding more stress on local store owners at the busiest time of year as they scramble to reprice their inventory only to swap back in February.

Thankfully, New Democrats have a plan to make things simple. Let us make the GST cut on life's essentials permanent, so Canadians can have more money and businesses know what to expect.

Will the Liberal government make life easier for everyone?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news: Our government is delivering Canadians a tax break on GST starting tomorrow, December 14, and this is really going to benefit retailers and consumers.

Let us listen to what the Retail Council of Canada said. This break “will create major tax savings for Canadians, along with economic stimulus for our industry”.

Restaurants Canada called this a big win for the restaurant industry and predicted that our tax break will boost sales by 5%, bringing restaurants \$1 billion of additional revenue.

This tax break will bring more people in the door of these small businesses. We are grateful to be providing this break for Canadians.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, today the Canada Post strike is a month old and there is no end in sight. This essential service to small businesses is absent during a critical sales period needed for their survival.

Two obstinate groups hold Canada hostage while the Liberals, desperate to cling to power, are afraid to lose NDP support by ending the strike. Both should know that there are no workers to unionize or taxpayers to tax without employers, and the government's failure to act is harming Canada's top employers and our economy.

Will the government do its job, put Canada first, stop hiding behind the CIRB and end this strike?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the job of the Minister of Labour is to respect the Canada Labour Code. That is exactly what we have done.

Today, I acted decisively to use one of the powers granted to the Minister of Labour by Parliament, under the Canada Labour Code, to provide a reasonable solution to workers and a creative way out of this very fundamental impasse that we see at the bargaining table.

We are going to return Canada Post services to Canadians and to those who have been suffering over this conflict and, hopefully, arrive at a negotiated collective agreement by the spring.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

CIVIL AVIATION SAFETY

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a treaty entitled “Agreement between Canada and the European Union amending Annex B of the Agreement on Civil Aviation Safety between Canada and the European Community” done at Washington on June 12, 2024.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 19 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, respecting its participation at the 22nd autumn meeting in Dublin, Ireland, from October 2 to 4, 2024.

* * *

• (1210)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled “Towards Accessible Air Transportation in Canada”.

If I have a bit of time, I would like to thank the members of the committee for extraordinary work and the analysts, who also did extraordinary work. I would like to highlight, also, our clerk, Carine, who will be clerking her last meeting today for transport, and thank her for her fine work over the last couple of years.

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

FINANCE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Finance entitled “Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2025 Budget”.

I would like to thank our outstanding clerk, Alexandre Roger; analysts Michaël Lambert-Racine, Brett Capwell, Joëlle Malo and Mehrab Kiarsi; committee administrative assistant Lynda Gaudreault; Mélanie Therrien from the publications directorate; the whole team of interpreters, technology and staff of the committee; and, of course, all the members of the fabulous finance committee for their dedicated work on this study and report.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled “Future of CBC/Radio-Canada: Challenges and Opportunities”.

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

I would like to congratulate the committee on all sides for the most remarkable teamwork, having spent extra time in order to meet the deadline that the House set for the committee to table this report. I want to thank the clerk, the analysts and everyone else for just getting this done in record time so that we could follow the House order.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a dissenting report, in both official languages, on behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, on the House-ordered study un-

Routine Proceedings

dertaken by the committee on the recent job cuts announced at the CBC. The CBC cut hundreds of jobs while awarding lavish bonuses. This disgraceful abuse of taxpayer dollars when Canadians are struggling for financial survival has contributed to the growing movement to defund the CBC. Conservatives therefore recommend that the following actions be taken: Reject the bonuses, fire the Prime Minister and defund the CBC.

It is my honour to table the dissenting opinion on behalf of the members of the Conservative Party.

* * *

ADDRESSING THE CONTINUING VICTIMIZATION OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS' FAMILIES ACT

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-424, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Prisons and Reformatories Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to reintroduce McCann's law. In 2010, Lyle and Marie McCann from St. Albert were brutally murdered, and their bodies have never been recovered. Their murderer has yet to reveal the location of their remains and this compounds the trauma that the McCann family endures to this day. Lyle and Marie McCann deserve to have a proper funeral and their family deserves this closure.

McCann's law would provide judges, parole boards and correctional officers the tools to hold killers accountable for refusing to reveal the location of their victims' remains. It would extend parole ineligibility and ensure that revealing the location of victims' remains is a key consideration for parole boards. It is clear that there could be no rehabilitation for killers until they acknowledge the severity of their crime and the impact that hiding their victims' remains has on families. It is time to stand up for the rights of victims' families who continue to suffer the trauma of not knowing where their loved ones' remains are. It is time to put the rights of victims and their families above the rights of murderers.

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

* * *

• (1215)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC) Mr. Speaker, I move that the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, presented on Friday, May 10, be concurred in.

I am going to be splitting my time with my colleague and friend, the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Routine Proceedings

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, and as we move to the end of this session, I want to extend Christmas greetings to my colleagues, to members across the way and all the staff of the chamber, to the Deputy Speaker and his staff, and especially to all of the residents of Chatham-Kent—Leamington, whom I have the honour and privilege to represent in this chamber.

When I bring my constituents' voices here, I often speak of some of the major attributes of my riding, the rich agricultural and agri-food capabilities of my home riding. I often speak of the manufacturing sector and the vibrancy there, but today, I want to bring a fish story. Why would I talk about fish from Chatham-Kent—Leamington?

I live one and a half kilometres from the shores of Lake Erie. Lake Erie, one of the five Great Lakes, is actually the shallowest Great Lake. It is the warmest Great Lake and the most productive from a fishing perspective. Indeed, I have several commercial fishing harbours in my riding. Lake Erie is home to walleye, or pickerel, depending on what side of the creek or fence one is speaking from; white and yellow perch, yellow perch being my favourite; whitefish; and numerous other species that bring value and food to our communities, locally, nationally and internationally. This is a fish story. Those are the beautiful fish I just named, but my fish story is about a very ugly fish. Biologically it is a fish, but it looks more like an eel. I am going to be speaking today about the sea lamprey, an eel-like fish parasite.

My story begins on November 30, 1829. Why does it begin then? That was the opening of the first rendition of the Welland Canal. In Ontario, we host one of the seven wonders of the world, the great Niagara Falls, which served as a barrier for entry of this north Atlantic-living fish parasite, the sea lamprey, for eons and decades. However, with the opening of the canal, and the great prosperity that it brought, came challenges.

The canal allowed the sea lamprey to begin its way into the Great Lakes system. There is documentation as early as 1897 of discussions across the border with our American friends about this problem of a fish that is actually an eel about so long, and ugly. It has a sucker-like mouth. If anyone ever has the opportunity to have the Great Lakes Fishery Commission folks stick one to your hand, as they come here at least once a year, take the opportunity. It is an ugly parasite and it began decimating our fishing stocks in the Great Lakes, in particular in Lake Erie. It attaches itself to the fish, making the fish unmarketable.

So began the attempts to control it. Largely, this was done parochially by the eight states that border Ontario. To a smaller degree, Quebec also has shoreline, but not on the most productive lake, Lake Erie.

I should mention one other fact. While it was documented in 1897, the problem began to really escalate with the reopening of the much larger Welland Canal in 1932.

Attempts to address it were largely unsuccessful and the commercial fishing sector was decimated until the treaty of 1954, the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries, which resulted in agreement and the creation of the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission in 1956. It consists of eight commissioners, four Americans and four Cana-

dians, and it worked very well. It began to address sea lamprey control and was housed under what was at the time external affairs in Canada, which provided the funds from our Treasury. Similarly in the U.S., the State Department transferred the funds to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In Canada, it was transferred over, post-1979, to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

● (1220)

In hindsight, that is when an error was made. The machinery of government function was transferred in the administration of this commission from the department of external affairs, as it was known then, to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. That was a mistake because it created a structural conflict of interest.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is the agent that carries on the sea lamprey work here in Canada. Back in 1956, there was an agreement struck between the Americans and Canadians that 69% of the cost of sea lamprey control would be borne by the Americans, as that was their share of the Great Lakes, and 31% by Canada. For decades, that worked. Research and other activities were cost-shared at fifty-fifty. For a long time, that worked and was managed binationally.

However, over time, when the funds flowed from our Treasury through to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, were transferred on to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and then, under contract, were transferred back, the DFO decided that perhaps instead of sending all the funds over, it would just keep what it thought it needed and send on what was not intended to come back by way of contract. That led to the great temptations of withholding funds, of keeping too much and removing the decision-making process from where it ought to be at the binational commission, and it was housed in the ministry itself. This led to friction at the table.

The U.S. felt so strongly about the value of the commission that even though Canada was not paying its share for so long, the U.S. actually funded our share. Over time, the arrears built up to over \$77 million. Pressure increased on the government to finally pay Canada's share. In the 2022 budget, the Minister of Finance allotted a budget line item of \$44.9 million over five years to fully fund Canada's share, but even that was not enough to solve the issue. Why? Prior to the 2023 negotiations, the DFO informed the commission that it was not going to be forwarding all the funds, as it was so ordered. It retained funds again, causing the U.S. commissioners to walk away from the budget-setting process and walk away from the table. That had not happened before.

Now we have an ugly fish starting to cause an international incident, to the degree that U.S. congressmen have written letters directly to the Prime Minister's Office. This was a matter of discussion when the U.S. President was here in May 2023. This ugly fish was a topic that had to be taken to the highest levels because Canada was not funding its proper amount. The U.S. commissioners had had enough and boycotted. Can anyone imagine this happening?

Routine Proceedings

Let me read an excerpt of the letter from the congressmen dated June 6, 2023:

We are writing to draw your attention to a matter of great concern regarding the implementation of the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries of 1954....

As members of the bipartisan Great Lakes Task Force, we were pleased to hear about the attention given to the Great Lakes during President Biden's recent visit to Ottawa. However, we are concerned by the breakdown in the functioning of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (or Commission), which is responsible for coordinating cross-border fishery management and controlling invasive sea lamprey....

They go on to identify the structural interest. The commission itself secured a legal opinion by Fasken over the studies the fisheries committee did. It has asked for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' counter legal opinion. None was provided. The request has been sitting on the Prime Minister's desk since April 2022. It is my understanding that the machinery of government is finally being transferred over.

What is the lesson for us? The lesson here is that governance is important. Accountability is important, as we are seized with in this chamber on a daily basis now.

● (1225)

I will close with another biological metaphor. The problem is that the tail has wagged the dog. It is in the chamber and through committees and governments that we are to enable the legislation and direct our bureaucracies. That is not what has been happening and I most certainly do not want to see this happen again.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are literally hundreds of different reports before the House of Commons. One could argue that if we were to call each and every one of those reports, the government, no matter what political stripe, would never get the opportunity to deal with government business, private members' bills and so forth.

The Conservatives continue this multi-million dollar filibuster at great cost to Canadians that goes far beyond their tax dollars. My question to the member is related to the Conservative Party's continued abuse, preventing any sort of discussion on bills on the floor of the House of Commons because they want to show that the chamber is dysfunctional.

Does the member feel in any way whatsoever that he is contributing to the self-serving agenda of the leader of the Conservative Party?

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, the substance of the issue is at the very heart of what we have spent two months doing here. We are talking about accountability. There was not accountability within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in respecting the will of the chamber and transferring the funds from the Treasury to the international commission that was created by treaty. Canada was not living up to its obligations there, and our bureaucracy was not living up to obligations.

We are talking about the government not standing up to the orders of the chamber. It is the very same issue. The answer is no. We are preventing a great deal of problematic legislation from coming forward and we are absolutely willing to debate the issues of the day when the government respects the orders of the chamber.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank the member for bringing forth this important topic. I know this is a topic that was front of mind in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I believe the member, alongside myself and other members in the House, received the Water Warrior award from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission for the work we have been doing around invasive species.

Something that came up quite frequently in committee was the importance of the transfer of responsibility for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to Global Affairs Canada so that money can be put into the important work of those on the front line, making sure this invasive species is being taken care of.

Have we seen the action that has been clearly stated by the fisheries and oceans committee taken to resolve this issue once and for all?

● (1230)

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have both received that award. While not a sitting member of that committee, I have certainly subbed in because this issue is so very important to me.

Have we solved this issue? We have had indications that the government is going to transfer the machinery of government. What we have not seen yet is evidence that the monies are going to flow directly from the Treasury to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and then, after its decision-making, flow respectively to the DFO.

Let me put on the record two other things. First of all, as we worked on this at committee, there was largely multipartisan support for the transfer of the machinery of government. It was recognized at committee that there was a structural conflict of interest. Second, the solution was basically agreed upon.

I have lost my train of thought for the moment. Anyway, I am not convinced yet that we are at the end of this road. There are indications that the government is going to respect that, but we have not seen that evidence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

After listening to his speech, I would like to hear him talk about fairness. First, I would like to hear what he has to say about fairness for fishers in Quebec, those in the Magdalen Islands, the Gaspé, the North Shore and the Lower St. Lawrence. I would also like to hear what he has to say about fairness for first nations. How can we ensure that there is more fairness when it comes to granting access to fish?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, the issue of why it should retain so much control was actually raised by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, because it claimed it had a lot of influence on exactly the question that my hon. colleague from the Bloc raised. The reality is that the setting of fish quotas and access is a provincial jurisdiction and not done by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Chatham-Kent—Leamington for his interest in the file and for showing how important the issue is on both sides of the border.

On May 10, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development tabled a report in the House titled “Governance of the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission.” This report followed a report from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, FOPO, titled “Allocation of Resources to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission”, which was tabled on November 29, 2023, a year ago.

In under six months, two standing committees of the House of Commons tabled reports on the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. Canadians watching at home may be wondering what was happening at the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission that was so pressing that two standing committees prioritized resources and time to examine the governance and allocation of resources to the commission. The reason two standing committees studied the GLFC is that the Liberal government refused to correct a conflict of interest resulting from the machinery of government structure that still exists over the commission to this day.

It goes without saying that for the current government, conflict of interest is business as usual. This is especially true for the Prime Minister, who has repeatedly violated ethics rules and regulations, so it is not surprising that the Prime Minister himself came to be the problem when he refused to fix the conflict of interest involving the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission.

A briefing document seeking a decision from the Prime Minister to fix DFO's conflict of interest with the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission through a machinery of government change was sent to the Prime Minister for a decision on April 12, 2022. Nearly two and a half years elapsed before it was finally announced, on September 10, that the PM had finally issued an order for the realignment of the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, from under DFO to Global Affairs Canada.

At that time, the government claimed that the Prime Minister's order for which we waited two and a half years would finally resolve the conflict of interest. It turns out that it was all smoke and mirrors; it was a deceptive farce. The Prime Minister's order worsened the conflict of interest; it moved GLFC away from DFO to under Global Affairs, but the order also ensures that DFO continues to control the budget allocations earmarked for GLFC's invasive sea lamprey program.

DFO's years of denying the conflict of interest, and the Prime Minister's two and a half years of dithering and delaying a decision, were bad enough. Actions of the DFO and the Prime Minister jeop-

ardized GLFC's fight against aquatic invasive species that threaten biodiversity, ecologies and economies on both sides of the Great Lakes. Actions of the DFO and the Prime Minister also strained and jeopardized what was once a stable partnership of the Canada-U.S. co-operation.

When the fisheries committee studied the matter, representatives of the U.S. side were very unhappy with the Canadian government. Now that details of the Prime Minister's order announced September 10 are coming to light, I understand that our American partners have even been pushed to a whole new level of frustration with Canada.

● (1235)

The September 10 announcement put the commission's essential work and the Canada-U.S. bilateral co-operation back on the rails, seemingly. However, details emerged recently that have again derailed the restoration, stability and co-operation, which is why two standing committees tabled reports in the House of Commons, one in 2023 and the other in 2024.

We as committee members saw the fire burning in the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, and did our job by raising the alarm with the Government of Canada. Members of both committees came together and worked across partisan lines, because we saw that what was at stake in the fiasco is perpetuated by the Prime Minister. Conservation of the Great Lakes is at stake. Biodiversity is at stake. The Canada-U.S. relationship is at stake.

I would be remiss if I did not inform the House that the co-chair of the U.S. Great Lakes task force is none other than the United States Senator for Ohio J.D. Vance. Senator Vance is slated to be sworn in as the vice-president of the United States next month, on January 20, 2025.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of Foreign Affairs could have solved the problem years ago. They could have prevented yet another irritant in the Canada-U.S. relationship by simply living up to Canada's commitments in the 1954 convention on Great Lakes fisheries. Instead, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have chosen to ignore the problem, and now the Prime Minister has made it worse; he has kicked the hornet's nest in the backyard of the incoming vice-president of the United States.

The Prime Minister has failed the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, failed our U.S. partners, failed conservation and failed biodiversity, and he has failed Canadians. Who is going to pay for the Prime Minister's failures? It is going to be the same people who have been forced to pay for every other failure he has inflicted on us: Canadians, who will once again pay the price for the failures of the Prime Minister.

Routine Proceedings

I sincerely hope that my colleagues from the NDP are paying attention. One member from the NDP sat on the committee as we studied the issue, and I know that there are NDP caucus members who understand the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission issue. They support its being resolved, because they see what is at stake. However, we need our colleagues in the NDP to convince their leader to recognize the damage the Prime Minister is inflicting on Canadians every day. We need our colleagues in the NDP to persuade their leader to stop propping up the Prime Minister, who is hurting Canadians.

We have all heard statements made by the incoming U.S. president, and we all understand what is at stake. However, the Prime Minister insists on poking the Americans in the eye for no reason other than he is incompetent and holds onto his selfish ego, above the people who pay for his follies and failures: the people of Canada. We need to restore common sense to Canada's affairs, including foreign affairs, and the Liberal government has shown that it is not up to the job.

Therefore let us let Canadians finally toss the Prime Minister out on his ear by voting in a common-sense Conservative government that will live up to Canada's commitments in the convention on the Great Lakes fisheries.

• (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to being able to address this particular concurrence motion. Having said that, I am very disappointed, as I have pointed out, that the Conservative Party has made the decision to spend literally millions of Canadian tax dollars all in the name of a filibuster to prevent Canadians from being able to receive legislation, whether government legislation or private members' legislation, and to see a full economic statement, among many other things. It is all because of a self-serving leader who sees his job as trying to demonstrate that the Parliament of Canada is dysfunctional. The only thing that is dysfunctional is the Conservative Party of Canada.

My question is: Why is the member agreeing to participate in the role that the leader of the Conservative Party has put upon himself and to continue the endless filibuster?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, the quick answer is this: Just produce the documents. The more extensive answer is that it is not this side of the House that is in disarray; it is the government. We see it. It is happening day after day. The stories are breaking about how the Prime Minister is going to put his so-called finance minister under the bus, and then run her over and bring in an outsider to run the country's finances because the Liberals have not got anyone capable within their own caucus to do it.

I think it is more than the country's finances that are at stake here; it is also the country's foreign relationships. The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission issue is but one example of issues that we will need to solve.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, when I asked a question about fairness concerning access to fish, I was told that such matters fall under provincial ju-

risdiction. Obviously, we know that. However, I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that in light of the answer that I got from his colleague.

Do the Conservatives think that fish care about areas of jurisdiction?

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, the interpretation was coming through very quietly, so I was not absolutely certain of what the member said.

We as Conservatives, and, I think, the Bloc member on the committee, agree that it is a problem that needs to be solved. It got hung up in the Prime Minister's Office. What came through looking like a solution has only made it worse. It is time to rid the House of the Liberal government and get things done properly.

• (1245)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary offered his opinion as to what the only problem in the House is. I want to ask my hon. colleague whether he would agree with me that the problem in the House is that the Prime Minister has emasculated the entire caucus and does not allow anybody to speak except for the one member and the member for Kingston and the Islands, who take up all the time despite having, as any human being would, a limited amount of knowledge.

The situation has resulted, effectively, in the people who know the least saying the most in the House. That is a profound dysfunction within the House currently.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I will not even try to get inside what is going on in the heads of the government members. It is truly disappointing that no one is allowed to speak on the government side of the House, other than the member for Winnipeg North. Repeatedly he stands up for questions. No one else seems to have a voice on the government side, or if they do have a voice, it is muted, muffled or muzzled by the leader. That is happening day after day.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my frustration is when I hear Conservatives talk about their great reputation when it comes to fisheries and oceans. I will tell members what it is like in my riding. Gail Shea, the former Conservative minister, was given a recommendation by DFO to not open the commercial herring harvest in my riding. The Nuu-chah-nulth were opposed to that. They actually had to go to court, because the herring stocks were at risk, to stop the DFO from allowing the commercial fishery to go ahead.

One thing I can agree with my colleague on, something I think we both share, is the frustration, when committees make recommendations to government to make changes, over how long it takes. We both agree that the owner-operator model, when it comes to the "Sharing Risks and Benefits" report, was tabled two governments—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I have to give time to the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap to respond very briefly.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, regarding the reports from the FOPO committee, the member was a member of that committee for a number of years. I enjoyed working with him. It is blatant that the government simply does not respond appropriately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I understand that there have been discussions to allow me to ask for unanimous consent to go to Questions on the Order Paper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 3134, 3135, 3138 to 3140 and 3143.

[Text]

Question No. 3134—**Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With regard to legal proceedings involving the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society: (a) what are the details of all cases in which the Attorney General of Canada is the complainant, including the (i) citation, (ii) file number, (iii) date, (iv) court or tribunal, (v) total expenditures; and (b) what are the details of all cases in which the Attorney General of Canada is the respondent, including the (i) citation, (ii) file number, (iii) date, (iv) court or tribunal, (v) total expenditures?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to legal proceedings involving the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, FNCFCFS, our electronic system has identified approximately 19 litigation files involving FNCFCFS that date back to 2006. This total is composed of various types of legal proceedings before the Federal Court, Federal Court of Appeal and Tribunals, wherein the Attorney General of Canada is an applicant, appellant or respondent, and the FNCFCFS is a complainant, applicant or respondent. Of the 19 files identified, nine files were brought by the Attorney General of Canada and 10 were against the Attorney General of Canada. Our electronic system is not able to identify files in which FNCFCFS could potentially be an intervenor or a party in another capacity. It is also important to note that it is not possible to search electronically in a way that identifies all litigation files that may involve FNCFCFS. A comprehensive search would require a manual exercise, which is not possible in the time allotted.

With respect to the legal costs incurred by the Government of Canada in relation to the identified legal proceedings involving FNCFCFS, to the extent that the information that has been requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has only waived solicitor-client privilege, and only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs and the approximate number of legal proceedings.

The total legal costs, actual and notional costs, associated with the identified legal proceedings involving FNCFCFS, amount to approximately \$14,545,000.00, over the past 18 years. The total legal

costs are with respect to litigation and litigation support services, which were provided, in these cases, by the Department of Justice. Department of Justice lawyers, notaries and paralegals are salaried public servants and therefore no legal fees are incurred for their services. A “notional amount” can, however, be provided to account for the legal services they provide. The notional amount is calculated by multiplying the total hours recorded in the responsive files for the relevant period by the applicable approved internal legal services hourly rates. Actual costs are composed of file-related legal disbursements paid by the department and then cost-recovered from the client departments or agencies, as well as the costs of legal agents who may be retained by the Minister of Justice to provide litigation services in certain cases. The amount mentioned in this response is based on information currently contained in Department of Justice systems, as of November 18, 2024.

Question No. 3135—**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:**

With regard to legal costs incurred by the government in relation to the invocation of the Emergencies Act in 2022, as well as any subsequent legal action: what is the total amount (i) paid out to date, (ii) scheduled to be paid out, on outside legal counsel, broken down by department, agency or other government entity which encountered the expense?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to legal expenses incurred by the government for outside legal counsel on work related to the invocation of the Emergencies Act in 2022, as well as any subsequent legal action, to the extent that the information that has been requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has only waived solicitor-client privilege, and only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs.

The total legal costs associated with expenses incurred by the government for outside legal counsel on work related to the invocation of the Emergencies Act in 2022, as well as any subsequent legal action amounts to \$3,900,968.93. This amount includes outside legal fees related to the Public Order Emergency Commission, which had a timeline compressed by statute. The total amount mentioned in this response is based on information contained in Department of Justice systems, as of November 4, 2024.

Question No. 3138—**Mr. Fraser Tolmie:**

With regard to the ArriveCAN application: (a) does the government have a plan to recoup the inappropriate payments made in relation to the development or implementation of ArriveCAN, and, if so, what is it; and (b) how much money has the government recouped to date related to ArriveCAN, in total and broken down by individual or vendor that received money?

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Inter-governmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the CBSA is currently reviewing all invoices submitted by GC Strategies, Coradix Technology Consulting and Dalian Enterprises Inc. to determine whether any overpayments were issued, and sharing all relevant information with Public Services and Procurement Canada, PSPC, for its own reviews. If inappropriate payments to these three companies are found as a result of the review, the CBSA will use any mechanisms available to recoup the funds, including through litigation or criminal prosecution, if necessary. In addition, any potential wrong doing from public servants will be referred for further investigation.

With regard to part (b), as the review is currently under way, the CBSA has not yet recouped inappropriate payments in relation to the development or implementation of ArriveCAN.

Question No. 3139—Mr. Fraser Tolmie:

With regard to the public service: (a) how many individuals were ministerial exempt staff members under the current government prior to being hired as non-partisan public servants; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by department or agency where the individual is currently employed?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under section 35.2 of the Public Service Employment Act, former ministers' exempt staff who have been employed for at least three successive years as exempt staff in a minister's office, in the office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, or in the office of the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, may be eligible to participate in internal advertised appointment processes open to all employees of the public service.

There are no provisions in the policies for ministers' offices pertaining to the obligation for former exempt staff to declare themselves as such. There is an obligation for the minister or their delegate to communicate with the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner of all exempt staff members whose employment has terminated or have left the minister's office. We would suggest contacting the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner as it contacts exempt staff who have been terminated to discuss post-employment obligations as stated in section 3.7 of the policies.

In addition, as per paragraph 3.7.4 of the policies, exempt staff can obtain a mobility provision if they meet the criteria of the Public Service Commission. The mobility provision offers former exempt staff the opportunity to participate in internal advertised appointment processes in the public service. The PSC manages the mobility provisions and may have information on whether an exempt staff who qualified for the mobility provision was hired in the public service.

TBS does not systematically track this information and is therefore unable to provide a complete response to the inquiry.

Question No. 3140—Mr. Michael Barrett:

With regard to meetings attended by the Prime Minister: what are the dates and locations of any meetings attended by the Prime Minister with the 24 Liberal members of Parliament, or representatives of their group, who signed the letter requesting the Prime Minister to step down?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's itinerary is available online at: <https://www.pm.gc.ca/>.

Question No. 3143—Mrs. Tracy Gray:

With regard to successful applicants to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's (ISED) Canada Digital Adoption Program between March 1, 2022, and October 25, 2024: (a) how many complaints were received by ISED staff against or by recipients or advisors of the Grow Your Business Online grant, and what was the nature of the complaints; (b) how many recipients of the Grow Your Business Online grant had their funding cancelled after their application was approved; (c) how many recipients of the Grow Your Business Online grant were required to refund the grant to ISED after their application was approved; (d) how many complaints were received by ISED staff against or by recipients or advisors of the Boost Your Business Technology grant, and what was the nature of the complaints; (e) how many recipients of the Boost Your Business Technology grant had their funding cancelled after their application was approved; and (f) how many recipients of the Boost Your Business Technology grant were required to refund the grant to ISED after their application was approved?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada digital adoption program, CDAP, was established to help small and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs, realize their full potential by adopting digital technologies. CDAP comprises two separate funding components: grow your business online, GYBO, and boost your business technology, BYBT.

With regard to part (a), 17 complaints were received between March 1, 2022 and October 25, 2024.

The nature of the complaints is as follows: eligibility criteria and application process; not being eligible to apply more than once; stacking rules; application process; application process and delays due to the review of proof of payments; application being rejected; not being eligible to apply more than once; eligibility criteria; not being eligible to apply more than once; problems with vendor; not being eligible to apply more than once; not being eligible to apply more than once; problems with vendor; not being eligible to apply more than once; not being eligible to apply more than once; problems with vendor; and eligibility criteria.

With regard to part (b), Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED, does not receive this information.

With regard to part (c), as of the end of Q1, July 2024, eight recipients, out of 20,634 grants that have been paid out, have been required to refund the grant to ISED after their application was approved.

With regard to part (d), out of the 29,103 grants disbursed up to October 25, 2024, boost your business technology received 295 complaints.

Routine Proceedings

Among the complaints regarding digital advisers, approximately 40% involved misrepresentation of the boost your business technology program or errors in advertising campaigns by digital advisers. Another 15% related to the quality of digital adoption plans produced, while an additional 15% were about digital advisers submitting applications on behalf of clients. The remaining complaints covered various issues, including ineligible discounts and invoice discrepancies.

With regard to part (e), currently, about 245 SMEs, representing fewer than 1% of claims, have had their claims rejected.

With regard to part (f), as of October 25, 2024, no businesses have been required to pay back the full grant to ISED after it was received.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 3133, 3136, 3137, 3141, 3142 and 3144 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 3133—**Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With regard to the Health Facilities Program operated by Indigenous Services Canada, broken down by fiscal year since 2005-06: (a) what is the total amount of funding (i) allocated, (ii) spent, through this program; (b) how much funding has gone to support (i) facility operations and maintenance, (ii) minor capital projects, (iii) major capital projects; and (c) broken down by province or territory, what is the total number of applications (i) received, (ii) approved, (iii) denied?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3136—**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:**

With regard to government statistics on Canada's incarcerated or prison population, since 2016: (a) as of the start of each year, how many individuals were incarcerated in Canadian prisons or correctional facilities, in total and broken down by type of correctional facility; (b) currently, how many individuals are incarcerated in Canadian prisons or correctional facilities, in total and broken down by type of correctional facility; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by violent and non-violent offenders?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3137—**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:**

With regard to government statistics on church burnings in Canada, broken down by year since 2016: (a) how many churches have burned down that the government is aware of, in total and broken down by province or territory; and (b) does the government have any specific plan to prevent future church burning-related arson attacks, and, if so, what are the details, including the date when the plan will be implemented?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3141—**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:**

With regard to funding provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care: (a) how much money has the PHAC provided to the task force, broken down by year for each of the last five years; and (b) in the last fiscal year, what is the breakdown of how the task force spent its funding allotment by line item?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3142—**Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to successful business applicants to the Employment and Social Development Canada Apprenticeship Service Program between June 1, 2022, and October 28, 2024: (a) how many successful applicants had a qualified first-year apprentice, broken down by the 39 Red Seal trades of the apprentice; (b) how many of the successful applicants had a qualified first-year apprentice (i) complete their apprenticeship and become a full-time employee with the applicant, (ii) complete their apprenticeship, (iii) start, but not complete, their apprenticeship, (iv) not start their apprenticeship; and (c) how many of the successful applicants had their grant refunded for failure to fulfill an apprenticeship agreement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3144—**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:**

With regard to the Canadian Dental Care Plan: what is the number of beneficiaries enrolled in the program, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) federal electoral district, (iii) Quebec municipality, if available?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to the concurrence motion. I would tell the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston not to worry as my feelings are not hurt.

At the end of the day, it is somewhat ironic that the Conservative Party would move a motion expressing concern about the lakes in Canada. Canada literally has millions of lakes. When I was in opposition, one of the most bizarre budgetary measures that Stephen Harper took when the current leader of the Conservative Party was either parliamentary secretary to the then prime minister or sat around the cabinet table, was a decision to cut the funding to the Experimental Lakes Area.

Anyone with knowledge, even the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston opposite in the Conservative Party, should be able to recognize the hypocrisy here. On the one hand, they are expressing concern in regard to what is taking place in the lakes. They are saying there should be more work done with respect to some of the studies and actions being taken, yet the leader of the Conservative Party today directly participated in the budget cuts for the ELA programs. It is truly amazing. It is almost as if the Conservatives completely forgot about their actions a number of years ago. Not only were Canadians upset about it, but it actually had an effect around the world.

Routine Proceedings

People could not understand how the leader of the Conservative Party would dump the programs in the Experimental Lakes Area, which was worked out of Kenora. We also had scientists in the city of Winnipeg who were dealing with it. A few dozen scientists were all looking at areas such as acid rain, which used to be important to the Conservative Party, but it does not necessarily care about it anymore. They talked about toxic metals, climate change, mercury pollution and all the other types of things that we find in our lakes that we should all be concerned about.

This is the type of work that was being done through the ELA programs for decades. It made it through Progressive Conservatives like Brian Mulroney and through Liberal governments. It only stopped when it hit the government of Stephen Harper and the current leader of the Conservative Party, who had the so-called internal wisdom between the two of them to decide it was time to cut the budget, throw the science out the window and let the lakes go whatever way it is the lakes would go. It was truly amazing.

Now the Conservatives bring forward a motion for concurrence that says that we are not doing justice to the issue of lakes and it makes reference to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The commission, no doubt, does fabulous work. There are representatives of both Canada and the United States on it. It is advanced in the Liberal caucus and by others who talk so much about our Great Lakes. We have a very strong and powerful advocate for our Great Lakes in the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport. I find it strange that we now have a far-right Conservative Party that has now taken an interest in science and lakes. That is an absolute joke.

● (1250)

The leader of the Conservative Party demonstrated very clearly what he thought about our lakes in Canada when the Conservatives made the decision to fire and get rid of dozens of scientists who were looking at ways to ensure that we have not only healthier lakes in Canada but also a globally strong footprint through the ELA and the programs it was providing. I introduced petitions on the issue when I was in third-party status with the Liberal Party. Therefore, for the Conservatives to try to pretend that they are concerned with this issue at this moment in time is a stretch.

I asked questions of the two presenters on it, and we found out why they have really brought forward this concurrence report. I want to get to the motivation behind their choosing this particular report. It was not to try to convince Canadians that they are concerned about the many lakes in Canada. It is far from that. I recall the two questions that I asked of both the member who introduced the concurrence motion and the member who followed the person who introduced the motion. Both are Conservative members who have been given their marching orders by the self-serving Conservative caucus, led by the leader of the Conservative caucus, who has one objective this session. That is to play a destructive force here on Parliament Hill to prevent legislation from passing, whether it is government legislation or private members' legislation, because the leader of the Conservative Party is more interested in himself and the Conservative Party than he is in Canadians.

I posed the question, and what kind of response did I get from the two speakers earlier? Well, we got an admission. The first member said that I was right. It is not necessarily about the concurrence

motion. He said that the heart of the concurrence motion is accountability, and accountability is really what this is all about. Then the member went into talking about how we need to directly hand the documents over to the RCMP and that would be accountability. That was the response that I got from the individual who moved the motion. Then, the second member reiterated the issue of accountability with respect to the motion. He said that we might not be here for this particular report. This is a mechanism by which they can stick to their guns to say to produce the documents and that, if we were to just produce the documents, well, then they would not have to do this.

I want to spend some time on those members' answers to the question because that is the motivation and the reason we are debating this issue. Obviously, they really did not think through the issue at hand, which is the concurrence report. When I heard it, the first thing that came to my mind was the hypocrisy of the leader of the Conservative Party because he participated in the cutting of the Experimental Lakes Area program. Had the members thought it through, they would have realized that and saved their leader some embarrassment. I would like to think, but that is not what they were thinking. They are more focused on the grander scheme of the multi-million dollar filibuster here on the floor of the House of Commons, which has been taking place for the last nine weeks. In the words of members of the Conservative Party who spoke today in response to my question, it is, for them, about accountability and the government needing to provide the papers. If we were to provide the papers, they would stop this self-serving Conservative game.

● (1255)

Let me address that point. To be very clear, it is very much not about Canadians but rather the self-interest of the leader of the Conservative Party. That is number one. As my colleague says, it is always about that when it comes to what is taking place here and outside the chamber. Secondly, this self-serving Conservative mentality is actually hurting Canadians.

As Conservatives try to go out and about, not only inside the chamber but outside the chamber, they like to say that Parliament is dysfunctional. Parliament is not dysfunctional; the Conservative Party of Canada is dysfunctional. It has gone so far to the right that it is a dysfunctional party that does not reflect anywhere near the interests of average Canadians.

We saw this when they stood up one by one and voted against giving a sales tax break to Canadians during the holiday season, even though they campaigned on it in the last federal election. In the last federal election, every one of them campaigned on giving a holiday GST tax break. The leader of the Conservative Party actually tweeted on the issue. However, when the time came to stand up and make their votes count, they voted against giving a holiday tax break from the GST on a wide variety of commodities. Shame on them.

An hon. member: It is a trick.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is. I look at this session and the trickery, as one member said, of the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. When the Conservative member gave me the answer that it was about accountability and to produce the papers and the game would stop, that is not true.

Let us talk about the multi-million dollar game. What the Conservatives are saying is that we are supposed to take unredacted documents and give them directly over to the RCMP. Why? The Conservatives say there was a motion passed many months ago saying that we had to do this. Well—

• (1300)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I might be asking for the impossible, but on the point of relevance, the member is saying nothing to the motion of concurrence we have before us. Could you please try to do what you can to tidy him up?

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the input. I will say that we should be sticking to the debate at hand.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, since this morning I have been sitting here listening to my Conservative colleagues speak on everything other than the main motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would encourage the member to read the responses that I received when I posed the question on the concurrence report. The response I was given, in essence, was that this is all about accountability and all we have to do is produce the papers. If we produce the papers, the game would—

The Deputy Speaker: This is just extending the debate. The more that we do this, the more the clock does not actually run. We are just debating.

I will recognize the hon parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am just going to assume the member never heard the answers that were given by the Conservatives when they said to me, in response to questions about the report, that it was all about accountability and the fact that all we have to do is produce the papers. All I am doing is indicating why it is not as simple as the members opposite say it is for us to produce the papers. If the member were listening, he would have heard how abysmal Stephen Harper and the current leader of the Conservative Party were on the ELA programs that they cut. Hopefully I will get a little extra time to be able to provide further comment on that.

I appreciate the interruption, but it was not necessary—

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to let this member go on and on forever. With such wisdom dispensed from his lips with every word he says, surely we can cancel our Christmas holidays to enjoy the pearls of wisdom that he continues to drop upon us—

The Deputy Speaker: I believe that is descending into debate. I do not know if we would get unanimous consent on that.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the love coming from that particular member. I am happy to sit on the side, if he would like to continue the discussions.

I suspect he is pleased when I am speaking because, 99% of the time, it is about facts. We can contrast that to what he hears within the Conservative caucus, which is a lot of social media spin, not necessarily based on fact. It is quite the opposite of fact. I want to be parliamentary, so I will not go any further than that.

Having said that, I was talking about the answers I received to my questions on this particular report. The Conservative members indicated to me that all we have to do is provide the unredacted reports to the RCMP. However, I will explain why that cannot happen. Even though a majority in the House of Commons supported that particular motion to give the documents directly to the RCMP, it needs to be noted that the RCMP, Canada's Auditor General and other legal experts have made something very clear: It would not be good for Parliament to be giving unredacted documents directly to the RCMP.

The motion, I would suggest, is in borderline contempt of the Charter of Rights, based on what we hear from the RCMP. We are going to listen to the RCMP, the Auditor General of Canada and other legal experts, and we will not produce those papers.

Then the Speaker made a ruling saying that the issue I just raised needs to be sent to the procedure and House affairs committee. His colleagues also said so; this was how they actually responded in their answer to me.

That is what the motion is. It is a Conservative motion, yet the Conservative members are now saying that they are going to put up dozens of speeches or more. I think there have been over 200 speeches on it now. That is even after we factor in the numerous concurrence reports.

An hon. member: Only one from the Liberals.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: No, actually about four or five.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we are talking about hundreds of speeches coming from Conservatives. That is why the Conservatives are getting bored with that topic. However, they do not want to let it go, so they are bringing in concurrence motions.

We can fast-forward to where we are today. We now have a concurrence motion because the Conservatives do not want to respect what the RCMP are saying. They do not even want to respect their very own motion to have it go to PROC; they would rather talk about this.

At the end of the day, we would love to see the Conservative Party reflect over the holiday season and have a merry Christmas type of thing. Maybe Conservative members could talk with their leader and say that the election is not until October 2025; there is so much more that we can actually do for Canadians. Let us try to be a bit cheerier. Conservative members could talk to the leader of the Conservative Party to see if we can redirect that far-right Conservative ship just a little. Then we could move on and do some things that would really help Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

However, if they do not, not to worry; as a government, we will continue to focus on the interests of Canadians, first and foremost, as we have in the last nine years.

Fish are important. When I think of Lake Winnipeg, I think of goldeye, walleye, carp, whitefish, perch and northern pike. Our lakes are very important. We need to do what we can.

● (1305)

This is one of the reasons that I was so critical when the Conservatives, including the leader of the Conservative Party, cut the ELA programs. Having said that, I am down to about 30 seconds, so I would move:

That this question be now put.

● (1310)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work that has been done on this file. The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission has done wonderful work in the Great Lakes for the environment, but also for planning our fishery resources and so forth. What we have seen over the years is Canada not paying its fair share, whether it be for sea lamprey projects or other matters, and it created much consternation.

Some members here in the House have come with me to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress and the Senate. We have to deal with so many different issues, but this irritant comes up all the time because we are stalling on the bill or we had been in the past. The recommendation here is to move the project back to where it belongs in Global Affairs.

Why are we creating another problem with the United States, unnecessarily hurting Canadians and Americans through bureaucratic stubbornness and reluctance to correct the field? We have to lobby on all kinds of new things coming up with President-elect Trump. Why would we not just be taking some of these irritants that do not even serve Canadians very well off the table?

Why is he protecting internal bureaucratic machinations instead of providing us the opportunity to get better results for Canadians and better fiscal accountability? This is a major irritant that is really unnecessary and will provoke more nonsense from the U.S.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the government has moved it over to Global Affairs, which I think is very encouraging. I do not want to take anything away from the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, which I know has done a great deal of work over the years. Representatives from Canada and the United States sit on it.

I think of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and the incredible work he personally has done in advancing the interests of the Great Lakes. I know the Ontario Liberal caucus is very much on top of this issue because it realizes the strength and the benefits of our lakes from an economic point of view and in terms of the environment.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has skimmed \$80 million out of the parliamentary appropriation to the Great Lakes Commission, against the authorization of this Parliament. This is the testimony before committee by the commission itself. The DFO acknowledged that.

Finally, after work of the fisheries committee and the pressure of the fisheries committee opposed by every Ontario Liberal, the Prime Minister assigned the order in council for it to be transferred to Global Affairs, except it was smoke and mirrors, like everything the government does. It was to help kill the sea lampreys, which suck the blood out of fish, somewhat like the Liberals. The issue is that they kept the money in DFO. The DFO still gets to control it, still gets to control the money switched over there, and is still skimming.

Why does the Liberal government believe it is right for over \$80 million of taxpayer money to be skimmed out of this program against the authorization of Parliament?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, over the years, one of the things I have learned is never necessarily to believe everything we hear coming from the Conservative caucus. Where I would agree is that when I think of the Great Lakes Commission, I think of the individuals who are on the board, but I also think of the many different advocacy groups that surround the Great Lakes. I believe there are many advocates that have been very successful at receiving different forms of support from the federal government. What I would remind my colleague opposite is to reflect on the leader of the Conservative Party in terms of his actions when he cut the Experimental Lakes Area program at a great cost, which no doubt had an impact on the Great Lakes.

● (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the parliamentary secretary once again boasted about the merits of the GST holiday that the government adopted with a super closure motion and that we did not even get to study and analyze in committee.

In our opinion, the GST holiday does more to help higher-income households. Suspending the GST on diapers and children's clothing is obviously a good measure. However, considering the key items covered by the exemption, such as junk food, chips and soft drinks, nutritionists are telling us this is not a good idea. As for alcohol and restaurants, it is mainly wealthier people who are going to benefit in proportion to their income.

Rent and basic food, which make up the bulk of low-income households' expenses, are already GST exempt. All that is left are heat, electricity and phone bills, but they are not part of the measure. Why not simply double the GST credit to help those who really need it?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the things about a minority government is that the government does work with opposition parties. I would ultimately argue this particular Prime Minister and government, even when we were in the majority days, continued to work with opposition parties. If the member has ideas that he would like to share with the Minister of Finance, other ministers, me or others, I would really encourage him to do so, because there is a great willingness to accommodate opposition where we can and where it makes sense for Canadians.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that water is a provincial resource, but one of the main levers that the federal government has for protecting Canadian water bodies, for ensuring that they are not polluted, is the Fisheries Act. The Fisheries Act prohibits the deposit of deleterious substances into fish-bearing waters, and we know that all waters are essentially fish-bearing. We know that the Conservatives promise, if ever, God forbid, they get into power, to chop expenses like crazy.

Does the hon. member fear that they would take away the capacity of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to enforce the Fisheries Act and prevent pollution in this country?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brings up an excellent point. All one needs to do is to take a look at the past behaviour of the leader of the Conservative Party. The leader of the Conservative Party was the point person for former prime minister Stephen Harper on a multitude of different issues, which included the Experimental Lakes Area in which there were significant cuts. Dozens of scientists were actually let go.

If we take a look at that past and hear what the bumper stickers of the Conservative Party are today, Canadians need to be concerned in terms of the future of the Fisheries Act, as the member has pointed out. Canadians should be concerned, because all the Conservatives are focused on, as one of my colleagues would say, is “chop, chop, chop”. At the end of the day, that means a lot less protection for our environment and a lot fewer services to Canadians.

I would hope that the leader of the Conservative Party would be not as much of a grinch but a bit more loving, over the Christmas season, and maybe revisit some of the far-right policies that he has adopted.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sure I am not the only member of Parliament in the House who has seen the Great Lakes Commission bring the sea lamprey to Parliament Hill, had the suction of the sea lamprey on their hand, felt what that is like and seen the teeth of the sea lamprey up close. It is not a good image, and I am certain I would not want to be a fish that comes across a sea lamprey.

This is the extent of the concern that we are talking about. We know the Great Lakes Commission does incredible work with sea lamprey control. The fisheries committee was very clear that we needed to change the governance to Global Affairs and that the funding stream also be held by the Great Lakes Commission, so it can do this important work that it needs to do and not have barriers in being able to do that work, which is ultimately our responsibility to do alongside our American partners.

I am not sure if the member was denying what my Conservative colleagues are saying, but perhaps he can clarify whether the funds are still flowing through DFO and if he is aware of the concerns that were brought forward through the fisheries committee of this continuing.

• (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that it has already been changed over to Global Affairs Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to this issue, which is very important to me. I will not go on the attack, since I do not think that would be appropriate just a few days before the holiday season begins. Instead, I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, with whom I have been working since 2021.

I want to recognize my government colleagues, of course, along with my colleagues from the official opposition and the third opposition party. Together, we talk, argue and review dozens of statements drawing on the testimony of many valuable witnesses, who are all experts in their respective fields. I want to sincerely thank those witnesses for their graciousness and their generous and valuable contributions. I also want to say a special thank you to our captain, the committee chair, the member for Avalon in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Witnesses include spokespeople from fishers' organizations or management or representative bodies, independent scientists, Department of Fisheries and Oceans scientists, top researchers, processors and other specialists in the ocean-to-table food chain. There are also professionals from the field, fishers, owners, employees, young fishers, retirees and former departmental employees. All of them have recognized and indisputable experience and knowledge, and all are clearly seasoned experts who generously offer their relevant contributions.

Now, I am going to take the liberty of making a small aside in my speech to talk about my own history, because, as the daughter and granddaughter of captains, the scion of generations of seafarers, I am not overly surprised by the range of issues and challenges facing the wonderful world of fishing today.

As soon as I was old enough to understand life, I heard my father talk about the sea and his love for it, but especially about its risks and perils, the bounty and dangers it held. He would make simple observations of the conditions or complex analyses as the vast ocean demanded. It all belonged to him, including the St. Lawrence, the estuary, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and everything that lived in them. All this was home to my father. The horizon, with its telltale lines, and the colour of the sky were his way markers. Even on land, my father stayed connected to the estuary. He would spend hours just gazing out to sea.

Routine Proceedings

My grandfather was as wise as an old sea wolf, and I can vouch that he was one of them. He had plenty of sea yarns and tales to spin us. I remember many of them, obviously, and I could share a whole range of stories. My grandfather was a good storyteller, especially after sitting down with a bottle of De Kuyper gin spiced up with a drizzle of honey and a tablespoon of boiling salt water. No more than a tablespoon, he would be quick to say, because there was no need to drown it.

He would make observations about the movement of fish stocks in response to major ocean currents or about the behaviour of beluga, which taught us much more than anything else could about the health of the river and the state of the resources. From time to time, my grandfather's teachings seemed more like old proverbs, but there was a lot of truth to them.

My grandfather would tell anyone who listened that the best mariners did not know how to swim and that is why they had to be such good sailors. He also said that no one is stronger than the sea, that the sea commands respect, respect for everything that it gives, including all things mysterious. He said that we must not think we can outsmart the sea, which is a challenge in and of itself, because if we defy it or underestimate it, one day, unfortunately, it will make us aware of our own insignificance. Grandpa had a predestined path.

He was called Ligori. He hated that name. It was after the election in the late 19th century, and his grandfather wanted to call him Laurier. An argument broke out because his godfather, a Conservative supporter, was determined to be the one to name his godson. That is how the choice of name came down to either Ligori or Zothique, but not Laurier. He always said he had no choice but to become a good sailor, because when a person's name is Ligori, they have to find their talent.

He sailed his schooner three seasons of every year. Before railways and roads, these schooners were the only means of transportation, helping coastal villages grow. Considering the number of coastal villages along the north and south shores of the St. Lawrence and the gulf, there can be no doubt that the schooners of the St. Lawrence played a key role in shaping the people and their future.

● (1325)

Speaking of the people, my two grandfathers also ferried people back and forth between Isle-aux-Coudres and Baie-Saint-Paul in canoes in the winter, providing islanders with the only contact they had with the northern mainland. There was also a fine science to conquering the ice. Perhaps one day I will have a chance to tell members more about that. My great-uncle even composed a song about the miraculous crossing of January 15, 1929, which I recorded and performed in concert for over 20 years. Everything is connected. Like fishing and politics, artistic creation is in my blood.

All jokes aside, I still remember the precious stories and teachings of my ancestors, and, at every committee meeting, I write in my notes, as a directive or instruction of sorts, that we must not think that we are stronger, wiser or smarter than the ocean itself. Otherwise, it will show us, in this context too, just how small we really are. A good example of this is the overpopulation of seals. The day that Brigitte Bardot and a group of activists used disturb-

ing photos showing what is, of course, a cruel reality, but also just a tiny part of a noble and natural practice used for millennia to maintain an ecological balance and provide food security for thousands of Inuit and Magdalen Islanders, my father, who was a cod fisherman, shared with me his concern that the cod in the St. Lawrence River would become more and more scarce until they almost disappeared.

The ill-intentioned exception confirmed the rule, and we all know what happened next and how it impacted resources. Twenty years earlier, my father had told me to enjoy my fresh cod, this delicacy of the sea. He knew that in 20 years or so, the prey-predator chain of human-seal-cod would be broken and the cod would disappear into the bellies of overpopulated, starving seals. The ecological balance would be upset, and it would take a long time for it to be restored.

He was right. He did not need innate knowledge, laboratory tests, measurements, or cross-Atlantic consultations. It was just an observation born of his long years on the river with the fish, marine mammals and pinnipeds, the winds and tributaries, the warm and cold currents, the surprising things he caught in new areas. He called that reading and understanding the movement of species. His ability to read those things accurately, his wisdom and respect for maritime elements, his skill in knowing how to read the sea, are qualities I hold in the highest regard, now more than ever when I talk to fishers.

My father also taught me that the sea lamprey, a veritable invader of the seabed in the Great Lakes, is also a scourge that would alter the river before long. He thought that the issues of the Great Lakes, a marine area protected and maintained by a bilateral commission between Canada and the United States, would one day be beset by the problems of an overly complex management, which would take precedence over the imperative of acting quickly to deal with the lamprey, not to mention a whole host of other issues. That brings me to my point.

The past few months have proven that his science is still sound and has helped me to grasp and offer an obvious solution, as well as to intervene on the importance of considering this solution, to bring it to light for the other members of the committee in order to fully support a clear and unequivocal request from the Great Lakes Commission itself during the study on the management of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. This request concerned the co-management of the commission, the basis and principles of its funding, and the challenges associated with the consultations and communications when the time came to intervene effectively on the various issues faced by the commission, which was then under the DFO's watch. Incidentally, the overall budget had practically no budgetary components—

● (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time. Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting.

*Privilege***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 as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I caught your eye right away so that I could rise and speak to this issue once again and raise matters that are of great importance to the residents of my riding, Calgary Shepard. They care about government accountability and the efforts of the government to continue to hide nearly 30,000 pages of blacked-out, redacted documents that the House and a majority of members of Parliament have ordered the production of and that everybody agrees should be given to us. This is why Parliament is now paralyzed: The Government of Canada and the cabinet ministers who sit in the front benches over there continue to refuse to provide these essential documents, which should then be passed on by the law clerk to the RCMP.

Again, I want to reiterate the point that it is a great privilege and an honour to rise and speak on behalf of the residents of my riding. It has now been over three years that they have given me the privilege of representing them in Parliament. I assured them when I was first elected that government accountability would be my top priority. I did not know at the time, though, that the openness of government and open government by default would be the slogans that the Liberal government would use. In fact, the Liberals even produced an entire document saying just that. It was first released in 2015; it was then updated this year to ensure accessibility. I will be quoting from it extensively to remind the cabinet ministers of their mandate letters, of the document they all signed on to when they took the oaths of office and became ministers. This is the document that the government, from 2015, sloganeered incessantly on for the first four years it was there.

Now we are at a point where the government is refusing an order of Parliament to produce documents that it has in its possession, which we all agree we should have. This is not just happening here on the floor of the House of Commons. It is also happening in parliamentary committees. We saw this during multiple other scandals, including the WE Charity and the SNC-Lavalin scandal. This is a repeat performance by cabinet ministers. What document protection they are doing is to protect their own political hides, rather than doing what is right by taxpayers and citizens of this country and just giving over the unredacted documents. If there is nothing to hide, they should just hand everything over.

The green slush fund is the term we have been using to describe this. An Auditor General's report slammed how the fund performed after the Liberals removed all the previous persons involved on the board of directors and replaced them with their own cronies. Its original name was the SDTC fund, the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund.

Up until 2017, when a previous Liberal cabinet minister started to muck around with the board of directors, SDTC actually had a clean bill of health. If we go back to the Auditor General's reports

over multiple years, it had a clean bill of health in those audits. Starting in 2017, though, multiple problems began to appear. This has now been the issue at hand for weeks and months now. Parliament has been paralyzed because the Government of Canada and cabinet ministers refuse to follow through with that order, as I mentioned. When the Auditor General did the review, it was found that almost \$400 million was misspent, corruptly spent. That is just on a sample. That was not all the projects.

Actually, the Auditor General has not had a chance to go through every single project to find out if money was spent corruptly in those situations. In one of the samples, 10 out of 58 projects were audited. The Auditor General found \$59 million of payouts that failed to meet even SDTC's own eligibility requirements. If we go through some of those emails that were being shared between the board chair and persons operating within the fund, the board chair was bringing projects of her own, so there were conflicts of interest involved. While it was found that those payouts did not qualify for that particular fund, the emails indicated they would find another fund to get the money that was being asked for. In fact, they did. There was a situation of corruption in that particular case.

There was another case of \$76 million that was awarded despite the fact that there were clear conflicts of interest. That was on top of the fact that there was a senior assistant deputy minister who sat in every single one of those meetings. That should have been an immediate red flag. That person should have gone straight to the minister's office to inform them of what was going on.

● (1335)

I do not believe the minister at the time, Navdeep Bains, and the minister now can claim that everybody was asleep at the switch and, gosh darn it, they did not know what was going on. They are kind of like a crew that comes upon an accident scene and says they cannot believe the accident happened when they are the ones who caused it. Liberals are the ones who created the situation by inviting corrupt behaviour, inviting misspending and inviting people to take advantage of the taxpayer. That is what they have done.

There was a previous chair of the SDTC board, the green slush fund board, when it was not the green slush fund yet because it was getting clean audits by the Auditor General. I believe it was Jim Balsillie. Jim Balsillie has a reputation for speaking his mind. He is well known among Canadians as a gentleman who has had a great career in finance and technology, and he speaks his mind. He freely attacks all sides of the House, I would say, whenever he sees things that do not match up with his beliefs. That just did not fit with the views of the minister at the time, so he fired him and replaced him with Annette Verschuren.

In fact, the same Annette Verschuren confirmed before committee that she has never applied for a job and never had to. In contradiction, the minister at the time, Navdeep Bains, claimed the Liberals hired her from the people who were applying and that is how she got the job as chair. She specifically said she never applied for that job. The job was posted, then the job was taken down and she was awarded that particular position. He recruited her. He called her twice to personally recruit her, despite the fact that she reminded him she had conflicts of interest.

Those same conflicts of interest then came up during the decision-making, because she was at the table making the decisions that the Auditor General later found were corruptly made. This is where we find ourselves. A fund that used to function properly, because it was getting clean audits from the Auditor General, does not exist anymore. This is how bad it is. This entire fund was completely shut down and rolled into the NRC, the National Research Council, because that is how fast the Liberals wanted to run away from it. They thought that would be enough, to simply sweep it under the rug, “nothing to see here”, mistakes were made.

It is like one of those old episodes of *Yes, Minister* from the 1980s. I highly recommend them to anyone in the House. Sometimes I will get that whiplash experience, where I will say, “I have experienced that.” I can say we are experiencing it right now. On this comedy series, there is one of those private secretaries at a U.K. committee who says lessons were learned, we will never do it again, or mistakes were made, but it was an interesting pilot project. There was some corruption, but there is nothing much to see here and we should just move on. They admit to it and then shut down the fund completely. It is, indeed, the green slush fund when close to half of the money was improperly spent.

The arguments I hear from one particular member on the other side of the House, because it seems nobody else wants to, or is allowed to, rise to defend this, is that there are charter implications, the RCMP does not want the documents and the law clerk has problems with it. Those are all arguments that should have been made in June when we first voted on the matter and a majority of parliamentarians decided the minority was wrong. At the time, the Bloc, the New Democrats and the Conservatives all agreed that these documents should be made available to the public and then passed on to the RCMP.

In fact, the law clerk even confirmed it. I have the sessional paper here, from the law clerk to the House Speaker, saying the law clerk will comply. The law clerk said that “the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police”. The law clerk has no problem, will dutifully do the job he is here to do, and will then simply pass everything on to the RCMP.

Then in the same letter from Michel Bédard, dated November 18, he goes on to say, “All three government institutions provided documents containing redactions and/or withheld some pages purportedly relying on the Access to Information Act. A copy of the letters I received are reproduced in the annex.” We know there continues to be documents that government agencies and institutions refuse to provide us. One of them is ISED, which continues to refuse to comply with the motion from Parliament that compels it to provide all of the information.

Privilege

• (1340)

We know this from past rulings by the Speaker and from government documents, and there is a terrific manual that members of Parliament should be using from a former Liberal MP, Derek Lee. The House has an absolute right to documents. The taxpayers and citizens pay for these documents to be produced. They have paid already, so now they have a right to see them.

Orders to produce documents are not common. I would say they are rare. In rare situations, there is an order to produce a document. In this situation, while the government has produced some of the documents, it has chosen to redact 30,000 pages of them and to not see them handed over to the RCMP.

I will note too that a common argument being used by the opposite side is that the RCMP does not want the documents, which is absolutely false. The RCMP has not said that. In fact, the RCMP commissioner, when exiting the Hogue inquiry room, was scammed by reporters. When he was asked the question of whether he had received the documents, if the RCMP had received the documents, he said that the RCMP did, that they had them, that it would take them and that it is up to the RCMP whether it wants to use them.

At no point does the order of the House tell the RCMP how to use these particular documents. The order does not instruct that the RCMP must use them. I will also add that in the documentation provided by the RCMP, in the letter that was sent to the committee on July 26, it also distinctly states, and this is directly from the letter:

The RCMP has also reviewed the implications of the Motion in a potential criminal investigation.... The Parliamentary production order does not set aside these legal requirements.

The legal requirements being referred to are about privacy. The letter goes on to say:

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 in the course of a criminal investigation could 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 exists could be used to support a criminal prosecution or further a criminal investigation.

That is not saying that the RCMP does not want it. It is not saying it cannot use it. It is saying in a “privacy interests” matter. Nowhere I note is it said that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was intended to be used as a shield against government corruption. That is nowhere. It was never the intention of the original founders of that document to use the charter to protect government cabinet ministers from accusations of corruption in a potential criminal investigation by the RCMP. That is the lead argument the government is making today.

Therefore, let us go back to what the cabinet ministers have all agreed to do. In past mandate letters, there has been a common reference, even in the latest one, about open and accountable government. I will note this reference is to a public document that is available on the website of the Prime Minister: “Open and Accountable Government”, 2015.

Privilege

At page 34, under “Public Access to Information and Privacy”, it states, “The government is committed to ensuring that government data and information is open by default, in formats that are modern and easy to use.” The 30,000 pages of blacked out ink in the documents are not easy to use. It goes on to say, “When producing papers in Parliament, Ministers are expected to ensure that requests for information...are met. Matters related to the production of papers in Parliament are coordinated with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.”

Now Liberals have refused to comply with one of the very first initial government documents they all signed on to. They all agreed to do this. They had no problems at the time to sloganeer and claim that they were going to be the most open government in the history of Canada, and they would never, ever, in a million years, dare to even think about keeping something from the public.

Then we had the SNC scandal. Then we had the WEF scandal. Then we had ministers fired because they did not want to do whatever the Prime Minister ordered them to do and to hide information from the public. We have learned our lesson as Canadians, as parliamentarians, to distrust everything the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's Office or PCO has to say.

Much of this is at, I will say, the direction of the Prime Minister's Office and PCO to continue to hide documents. This is intentional. The paralysis of Parliament is intentional by the Liberal government, because its members know darn well if they just give the 30,000 unredacted pages, this all ends and this all stops. For every single private member's bill on the Conservative side, on all the opposition sides, we have lost all of those slots.

• (1345)

This is my opportunity to remind the Speaker how low in the private member's bill draw he drew my name; I think I was third from the bottom when he did the draw. This is my gentle admonishment of the Speaker, for drawing me so low and not giving me the opportunity to have a private member's bill—

The Deputy Speaker: I really appreciate that. I do want to thank the hon. member, because he was the only member of Parliament who was there watching the draw, and I felt really bad for doing that.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard has the floor.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker for recognizing that fact. I was indeed there because I was hoping to be drawn with the high number so I could put forward another private member's bill, perhaps on the disability tax credit or on bereavement leave, which was something the House was able to agree on in Bill C-3, so let it not be shown that we cannot reach some type of accommodation. It actually happened right before Christmas, too. Perhaps we can have a Christmas miracle again this year and have the 30,000 pages of unredacted documents given out to the public so the RCMP and the parliamentary law clerk can see them.

It happened before, in 2021, with my private member's bill that was introduced into Bill C-3, in a deal that was made at the time. Let it not be said that the official opposition, the Conservatives, cannot make Parliament work. I also remind the House that six Conservative private members' bills have been passed into law. I

think, actually, in this fall session of Parliament, it is possible that we have passed as many private member's bills, on the Conservative side, as the government has. That might even be a first in Canadian history, because of the Liberals' own decisions to paralyze Parliament and not have it proceed with government bills.

Later in the “open and accountable” document that the Liberals have chosen to ignore now, talking about ministerial relations with Parliament, there is a fantastic paragraph on page 16. I will draw it to the attention of the House. In the PDF document, it is on page 54. It goes on to say:

The Prime Minister expects Ministers to demonstrate respect and support for the parliamentary process. They should place a high priority on ensuring that Parliament and its committees are informed of departmental policy priorities, spending plans and management challenges, including by appearing before parliamentary committees whenever appropriate.

It then goes on to say what these priorities should be and that ministers should give information when the information is needed for Parliament to “fulfill its role of legislating, approving the appropriation of funds and holding the government to account.” This is the current situation. We ordered the production of documents. The government is defying its most basic government policy, the one it keeps referencing in mandate letters.

Like I have said before, this is not the first time; it happens at parliamentary committees as well, including one on which I sit, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, where we now have an order to produce documents on a briefing note on the changes to the international student program. The government has defied the order to produce the documents. We are again finding ourselves in a situation where we are re-ordering the production of documents and more documents.

The most interesting thing that happened is that the Liberal members of the committee tried to throw the deputy minister under the bus and say that if the documents were not released within the mandatory 30 days, the deputy minister would be obliged to appear on the 31st day and explain himself as to why the government did not produce the documents. If anybody out there still believes anything the government has to say about open government, being open by default and doing things on behalf of Canadians and having the best interests of Canadians in mind, they should take a moment to go through the quotations and citations.

The Liberals have paralyzed Parliament. If that were all they had done, then I would say, on the opposition side, that it might not be so bad. However, what they have also done is just blown through an extra almost \$25 billion of spending this week. They had the other opposition parties vote for it. It is money that Canadians just do not have, so the Liberals are blocking Parliament and spending billions of dollars like this.

Privilege

I always have a Yiddish proverb, something appropriate to the particular situation. I know that members wait for it too. There are some I use more often than others. I know that on a three-legged stool, if one of the legs were the word of the government, its solemn ability to fulfill its promises, we would fall right off that stool. We could not lean on that stool and actually trust it so we could sit on it. It is a great Yiddish proverb that is very true.

The current government is the most untrustworthy government one could ever find. It claimed, in 2015, the things I cited; it sloganeered on them. However, it has been incapable of keeping its word to parliamentarians and to the citizens of Canada that it would be, in fact, open by default like its government document claims, that it would work with parliamentarians and ensure that Parliament can meet its accountability function. These things are in the very documents it has never reneged on, never rejected, but it refuses to comply.

There are 30,000 pages of unredacted documents missing. Let us have a Christmas miracle; let us have the documents released.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Joliette is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 2:30 p.m.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday, December 16, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:51 p.m.)

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