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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: The singing of the national anthem will be led today by the member for Samia—Lambton.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ELECTRICAL INJURY DAY OF RECOGNITION

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 6 marks the electrical injury day of recognition, an initiative led by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Canadian Electrical Contractors Association, the National Electrical Trade Council and other industry groups. The day is dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of electric shock injuries, which can have long-term health effects with no cure.

Proper awareness and safe work practices are essential to preventing these injuries and ensuring the safety of tradespeople. Key safety practices include establishing electrical-safe work conditions by isolating electrical equipment, testing for the absence of voltage and using lockout and tag out protocols.

I want to thank the organizations behind the electrical injury day of recognition for their ongoing commitment to promoting health and safety in the industry.

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SMALL HALLS FESTIVAL

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Small Halls Festival, a unique eight-week festival with events across the communities of Clearview Township. Community centres, outdoor stages and churches in Creemore, Singhampton, Duntroon, Nottawa, Sunnidale Corners, Brentwood, Dunedin and Stayner will each host different events.

Whether it is whisky or wine tasting, beer or food pairing, chicken races, craft fairs, car shows, a do-it-yourself marble run competition, music or art shows of any style and variety, there really is something for everyone at the Small Halls Festival.

I congratulate Mayor Doug Measures, Deputy Mayor Paul Van Staveren, Clearview Township council and the more than 250 community volunteers and sponsors who make the festival possible.

Come to Clearview Township to celebrate the best of rural living and see why the award-winning festival is one of the greatest in Ontario.

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WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Women's History Month gives us an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Canadian women, and since this year's theme is about women at work, I want to highlight the integral role that women play in shaping our economy.

I regularly meet with women entrepreneurs in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, like Brigitte Soares of Apostrophe Accounting, Julie Bobiak of the Lukaya Café, Julie DiNardo of Gleam Smile Centre and the Montague sisters, who founded BLK Owned, which helps uplift and promote other local businesses.

Because of these conversations, I know how important the government's initiatives have been. Our national child care strategy has helped more women enter the workforce than ever before. Our women's entrepreneurship strategy is providing loans, investments and a critical knowledge hub. I believe that measures like these are due to the fact that we have gender parity in cabinet and Canada's first-ever woman finance minister.

While Conservatives just keep hurling meaningless slogans, on this side of the House we are actually getting things done.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

PROTESTS FOR PEACE

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Protesting for peace in the Middle East and mourning the civilian death toll is legitimate, but shouting, “We are Hamas, we are Hezbollah” or “Death to Canada” in protest on October 7, as we saw in Vancouver, is despicable.

This echoes the problems we are also hearing about in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois unreservedly condemns such statements. There is a difference, a gulf, between freedom of expression and claiming to be part of a known terrorist entity. There is a wide gap between wishing for the Palestinians' safety and freedom and calling for the death of Canada. That is coming from a separatist.

I have a message for those who really want a ceasefire. They should ask their federal government why it is doing absolutely nothing rather than intimidating their Jewish neighbours in Quebec and Canada. They have nothing to do with this. That is the difference between a pro-Palestinian protest for peace and an anti-Semitic rally to incite violence.

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● (1410)

[English]

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-71, a vital piece of legislation that would address the long-standing injustice faced by lost Canadians, individuals who, due to the Harper Conservatives' first-generation limit, have been unfairly excluded from Canadian citizenship. These individuals have lived in, worked in and contributed to Canada. Bill C-71 would grant citizenship to those people who were unfairly impacted by the previous Conservative government, while establishing a substantial connection-to-Canada test moving forward.

I look forward to working with parliamentarians from all parties to get the work done. It is time to right this historical wrong and ensure that all who should rightfully be Canadians are recognized as such.

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STEPHAN G. STEPHANSSON

Mr. Earl Dreesen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the great local heroes of Markerville, Alberta, is renowned Icelandic poet Stephan G. Stephansson. Born into poverty in northern Iceland in 1853, he immigrated to the U.S. in 1873 and then in 1889 to his Markerville home.

Farmer by day and prolific poet by night, he composed verse, not in English but in his native Icelandic. He has been called the greatest poet of the western world, having published more than 2,000 pages of high-standard poetry. The local Stephan G. Stephansson Icelandic Society, formed 50 years ago, restored the original home site, which is now an Alberta provincial historical site. The Writers' Guild of Alberta annually presents the Stephan G. Stephansson

award in Stephansson's honour as it celebrates this amazing poet and playwright.

Recently, Donna Nelson, volunteer extraordinaire, was recognized for her exemplary contribution to the preservation and presentation of Alberta's heritage. Congratulations to Donna.

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WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Women's History Month this October, we are reminded of the incredible impact women have made and continue to make in our economy and our communities. The theme, “Women at Work: Economic Growth Past, Present and Future”, beautifully highlights this ongoing journey.

Today we celebrate incredible local leaders in my riding, like Monique Dennison from the Richmond Hill Board of Trade and Sandra Ferri from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, who are working every day to support businesses. We celebrate entrepreneurs like Tanya Lindsay, small business owners like Deborah Clarke and Jaclyn Zhang, women in real estate like Heidi Kreiner-Ley, young women like Paris Johnson, and many other women who are so vital to the small- and medium-sized businesses in our communities.

Over the last 40 years, women have powered one-third of Canada's economic growth, and there is still so much potential ahead. Our government not only celebrates women's history but also believes in their future. We will always support women and protect their rights, unlike the official opposition and its leader.

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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to increase awareness and raise funds for research into breast cancer's cause, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure.

[Translation]

Our government funded the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care to expedite updates to breast cancer screening guidelines as more and more women, particularly indigenous, Asian and Black women, are developing breast cancer in their forties, not their fifties. However, it is currently recommended that screening begin at age 50.

[English]

The task force determined that there is not enough Canadian research to justify making a change. That in itself is unacceptable and indicates that we need more relevant and recent research done on women's health, which must include Black, Asian and indigenous women.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, in some provinces, the recommendation is to begin screening at age 50. That means that many women are diagnosed in the later stages of the disease, which reduces their chances of survival.

[English]

On another note, I would like to give a shout-out to all the awesome organizations and businesses, including Pink in the City and Alphabet Café, that have campaigns of their own for this very worthy cause. Their contributions are saving lives, and we want to thank them very much.

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WHARF MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, DFO officials, in writing, told me 10 months ago that they would work with the harbour authority at Seeleys Cove on critical wharf repairs. Yesterday, DFO announced that this federal wharf would be condemned, and I have discovered that no discussions about repairs at Seeleys Cove happened with the harbour authority. In other words, I was misled by a public servant.

This was after the Liberals cut small-craft harbour funding in my New Brunswick riding, as well as in the neighbouring riding of Fundy Royal, this year to support Liberal ridings. The fisheries minister even allocated \$45 million to wharves in her Quebec riding this summer to save her neck in the next election. It is no wonder Canadians believe that the Liberal government is corrupt.

It is inexcusable for DFO officials to lie to a member of Parliament. It is unforgivable for public servants to operate like partisan Liberals.

What the hell is going on at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

• (1415)

The Speaker: Before we continue, I am going to ask the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest to please withdraw that language, which is not considered parliamentary.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the unparliamentary language; the rest stands.

The Speaker: This is the second time in two days this has happened. I would ask members to please avoid using language which is clearly not parliamentary.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Vimy.

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[English]

TOURISM

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tourism brings people together and fosters a sense of national pride. This week, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada is holding its Hill days events to showcase our tourism industry and to highlight the importance of the visitor economy. I want to thank them for their work and advocacy for Canadian tourism businesses.

[Translation]

Our government supports the tourism sector with programs like the tourism growth program, which is offered in all regional devel-

Statements by Members

opment agencies. The Conservatives' policy of fiscal restraint would jeopardize programs that support tourism operators.

[English]

Investing in tourism leads to economic growth, job creation and environmental protection while supporting the flourishing of local culture, including indigenous heritage.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is more proof that the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, crime or corruption. The Attorney General found that Liberal appointees to the green slush fund gave nearly 400 million taxpayer dollars to their own companies, with over 186 conflicts of interest alone, at a time when Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat and house themselves.

The Speaker has ruled that the costly NDP-Liberal coalition violated the House order to turn over evidence to the police for a criminal investigation into the latest scandal. Does anybody see that this is obstruction of justice? Instead of coming clean, the NDP-Liberals have chosen to paralyze Parliament, pushing aside all work that we are doing to address the doubling of housing costs, food inflation and the crime and chaos on our streets.

Will the NDP-Liberals end the cover-up and give evidence to the police so we can finally get accountability for the corruption and Parliament can get back to work?

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned for our regional forestry worker. The Liberals, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, are threatening the regions with an order that will kill 1,400 jobs, at the very least.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change's decision will seriously jeopardize the survival of our regions, and yet the minister could not even be bothered to go and meet with them. What we know now is that the Bloc Québécois is no longer a party that defends the regions. It is always looking out for the areas around Montreal. The proof is that the new Bloc candidate in Repentigny, Patrick Bonin, has taken a clear stand in favour of the order and is asking the federal government to intervene. This is really a Liberal-Bloc coalition.

The Bloc Québécois no longer understands what is happening in the regions. Ignoring these realities is not just irresponsible. It also demonstrates that there is a clear disconnect between Montreal's concerns and those of the regions. It is time to take action to protect jobs and the future in our regions.

Let us put an end to this hypocrisy and make room for common sense.

Statements by Members

• (1420)

SPANISH NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the Spanish national holiday, I rise today to pay tribute to Canadians of Spanish descent who have contributed to building this beautiful country. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians of Spanish descent have made Canada stronger by generously and proudly sharing their history, their language and their culture.

[English]

To mark the occasion, the Spanish flag was raised on Parliament Hill today for the first time. This was done in the presence of the Spanish ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Alfredo Martínez Serrano; his wife, Rosa; State Secretary Olmedo; members of the House; and prominent members of Canada's Spanish community.

The ceremony served to reinforce the strong ties between Canada and Spain and honour those, like my own grandparents and great-grandparents, who came to our shores following a long journey across the Atlantic. May the strong ties between Canada and Spain only continue to grow. May Spain and Canada see peace and prosperity in our time.

Gracias.

* * *

SUDAN

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the catastrophic war rages on in Sudan, thousands of children are facing imminent death from malnutrition. Gender-based violence targeting women and girls, including sexual assault, is being used as a weapon of war. To date, not one single person has been brought to safety, and the minister is not expecting any arrivals this year. Lives are being lost as people wait for their applications to be processed.

The NDP is once again calling for the government to expedite processing; allow trusted organizations, such as the IOM, to help with biometrics; remove the arbitrary application cap of 3,250; and expand the program to include vulnerable children and those who were outside Sudan prior to April 15, 2023, and cannot get back home because of the war.

Over 286,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada under the CUAET program. Sudanese Canadians deserve equitable treatment in the world's largest displacement crisis.

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[Translation]

FÉLIX ROSE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, large parts of our history have been scrubbed from the history books and erased, left to fade into oblivion. History cannot be fully explained without these pivotal moments that are far too often forgotten.

Fortunately, we have documentary filmmakers in Quebec who provide a unique perspective on our society and go beyond the official canon to help us rediscover ourselves. We owe so much to these women and men who uncover the truth: Pierre Perrault,

Denys Arcand, Michel Brault, Pierre Falardeau, Manon Barbeau, Will Prosper, to name a few.

Félix Rose, who is in Ottawa today, is one of these giants of storytelling. He reminds us of important events that have been left out of the national story, whether *Le dernier felquiste*, *Les Rose*, or now *La bataille de Saint-Léonard*, which he is showing in Gatineau this evening.

Through Mr. Rose, we commend the exceptional work of the documentary filmmaker. I invite my colleagues to come watch these thought-provoking films.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are making Canada unsafe. Violent crime is up 50%, and, under the Prime Minister, hate crimes are up 251%.

To make matters worse, the NDP-Liberals are allowing a terrorist organization to operate freely within our borders, refusing to list Samidoun as a terrorist organization under the Anti-terrorism Act. Israel and Germany have already listed Samidoun as a terrorist organization. The EU deported the leadership of Samidoun. What exactly are the NDP-Liberals waiting for?

Common-sense Conservatives would ban Samidoun under the Anti-terrorism Act and make sure that it does not operate within our borders. We would protect Canadians of all faiths and all cultures, bring home safe streets and ensure that Canadians can live in peace within our communities.

* * *

• (1425)

FAR-RIGHT MOVEMENTS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada and around the world, we have seen the emergence of radical far-right movements. These movements have had a profound impact on the types of governments that have been elected and on the lives of millions of people around the world, including here in Canada. They have organized disinformation campaigns designed to divide people and undermine confidence in reliable sources of information. They have impacted how some people treat others. They have impacted how some politicians treat others, including here in Canada.

Oral Questions

Far-right movements have led to some politicians acting against the best interests of Canadians by opposing sound economic policies; by opposing sound social policies, such as dental care, child care or better long-term care; by undermining fundamental rights, such as those protected in our charter, including women's rights like a woman's right to choose; and by standing against measures to stand up to aggressors, such as Russia, that pose a threat to us all.

I urge us all to work together to stop the growth and influence of these far-right movements. It is essential to Canada's security, to our economy and to our freedom.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives would have liked to be working in Parliament today to counter real estate inflation, which has doubled the cost of housing over the past nine years under this Liberal government, or to counter food inflation, which is 36% higher than in the U.S.

Unfortunately, we are instead focusing on the fact that Parliament has been paralyzed by the Prime Minister. He has paralyzed Parliament by refusing to hand over the documents that you, Mr. Speaker, ordered the government to send to the RCMP in relation to a \$400-million scandal.

What does he have to hide?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is absolutely false.

Here is what the RCMP said about this motion: “There is significant risk that the motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes and Charter protections.”

Let us follow your directive, refer this motion to committee and get back to the important work of the House.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a \$400-million scandal, eight times the magnitude of the sponsorship scandal in monetary terms, which led the Auditor General to identify 186 conflicts of interest. The green fund chair has already been found guilty of breaking the law.

When someone steals money, do we call the police or do we call a committee?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that Canadians are fed up with the Conservative Party's games. Canadians are tired of the Conservatives' slogans too, and they have had it with the Conservatives' obstruction.

On this side of the House, as we have said repeatedly, we will always stand up to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals in Canada. We will always be here to defend democracy. We will continue to fight for Canada.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives would have liked to be working today to counter the doubling of housing costs the Prime Minister has caused or the record food price inflation, which has been 36% higher in Canada than in the U.S. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has paralyzed Parliament by refusing the Speaker's ruling. It directed his government to turn over evidence in the \$400-million green slush fund scandal that the Auditor General says involves 186 conflicts of interest, with the chair of the fund found guilty.

What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is not being truthful with Canadians.

The RCMP commissioner himself said:

...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 [exist] could be used to support a criminal prosecution or further a criminal investigation.

Let us get this to committee and get back to work.

● (1430)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a \$400-million scandal involving Liberal appointees giving millions of dollars to their own companies, and the minister's story is now changing.

Last week, she claimed that the government had given documents to the RCMP. This week, they are claiming that, if they gave documents to the RCMP, it would cause the Charter of Rights to come crashing down. It sounds as though there is a new story every week to justify paralyzing Parliament to cover up the truth.

What is in these documents about this \$400-million scandal that the Prime Minister is so afraid of?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a typical witch hunt from the Leader of the Opposition to go after people who have nothing to do with this. These are files, such as personnel files, that contain private information of individuals who have nothing to do with what is going on.

The RCMP and the Auditor General themselves raised concerns with this motion. It is the government's view that we should send this to committee so that we can get on with the important work of the House and protect the rights of Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member says it is a “witch hunt”.

Oral Questions

The Ethics Commissioner, who was appointed by the government, has found the chair of the fund to be in violation of the law. The Auditor General, who was also appointed by the government, says there were 186 conflicts of interest involving Liberal appointees, who gave millions of dollars to their own companies. It was \$400 million. There is potential criminality, according to the main whistle-blower in the scandal.

Any other employer would have voluntarily turned over all the evidence to the police if it had been ripped off by its own staff. What is the Prime Minister hiding?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if and when the police request that information, it will obviously be handed over because that is proper judicial process. However, when Parliament is doing that, Canadians should be concerned because, when the leader of the Conservative Party is going after the rights of other Canadians, it is only a matter of time before his political vendetta comes after the rights of all Canadians.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify something. The Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-282, which excludes supply management from any future trade negotiations, and all parties in the House have at various times supported this bill, which is now in the Senate. I want to make this very clear. The government holds the executive power that stems from the democratic process.

Does the government still agree that supply management, which is so important to farmers, should be excluded from all future trade agreements?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having been a dairy farmer for a large portion of my life, I fully understand and appreciate the value of the supply management program. Our government fully supports Bill C-282 and urges the other place to move on this legislation as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me further clarify something. Two unelected senators have been unequivocal. They are clearly saying that supply management must be part of future trade negotiations and must not be excluded. They are saying the opposite of what the government is saying.

By not asserting its leadership with two unelected senators, the government is turning its back on farmers in Quebec and Canada, is it not?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, surely the member is not trying to suggest to me that our government is turning its back on dairy farmers. I am sorry, but we have always been there for dairy farmers, right from the start. We will continue to be there for as long as it takes.

We chose to appoint independent senators. It seems to me once again that the Bloc Québécois should understand that concept.

* * *

● (1435)

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members will not believe this. Corporate landlords are using AI technology to rip off renters and then jacking up rents. The United States is taking legal action against this, but the Liberals are letting it happen here in Canada. I know that the Conservatives do not care because their chief adviser is also a chief lobbyist for corporate landlords. What is the Liberals' excuse?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and for his concern for the rising cost of rent, which I completely agree is a very serious issue. Where we differ is that we are not satisfied with just launching complaints on the floor of the House of Commons.

We want to advance policies that would put solutions on the table to make a meaningful difference for families. That is why we are putting measures in place, such as cutting taxes on apartment construction, to help build more homes. It is also why we are increasing investments to build more affordable housing and why we put a renters' bill of rights on the table to help protect renters in precarious situations. I only wish the NDP would care enough to join us in trying to do something about the problem.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's excuses are way cheaper than rent.

Shamattawa First Nation has had undrinkable water since 2018, and the Liberal government is fighting it in court, arguing that it does not have a legal responsibility to clean the water. The government is also arguing that, when a minister says something, it is just politics and not something we have to believe the government would actually do.

Will the Liberals call off the lawyers and clean up the water?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have been doing over the last nine years, cleaning up the mess that the Conservatives left behind. We have made over \$8 billion in investments in clean water operation plants across the country.

We have legislation, incidentally, tied up in committee. Hopefully, it will get to the House shortly. I will be testifying tomorrow about the legislation. There are hundreds of chiefs who have called on the NDP and the Conservatives to get this legislation moving through the House, so that we never go back to that time again.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and, now, time is up. You ruled that the government violated the House order to turn over evidence to the RCMP related to the \$400-million green slush fund scandal, yet the Liberal government continues to obstruct justice by refusing to turn over the documents.

When will the government end this cover-up and let the House focus on solving the housing, food and inflation crises that it has created?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is saying is absolutely false. It is the Conservatives who are filibustering their own motion in the House because the RCMP and the Auditor General have both raised their extreme discomfort with the motion the Conservatives put forward.

If the Conservatives want to get back to work, we are ready to send this to committee to make sure we can talk about the issues that matter to Canadians. That is what Liberals are here to do. We do not understand why Conservatives do not want to do that.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that it is the Liberal government that is obstructing justice and holding Parliament in contempt by refusing to hand over documents to the RCMP. Now we know why. The Auditor General has found that the Liberal-appointed board members gave nearly \$400 million to their own companies. This is happening at a time when Canadians can barely afford food to eat, and when poverty diseases, such as scurvy, have resurfaced in this country.

Will the NDP-Liberals take accountability and just hand the documents over to the police?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three times in this question period I have heard the Conservatives talk about obstructing justice. Let us talk about how justice works in this country. When law enforcement wants to prosecute an individual—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1440)

The Speaker: Order.

I will invite the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to start from the top.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, three times in this question period, so far, I have heard Conservatives talk about obstructing justice. Let us talk about how justice actually operates in a democracy.

When law enforcement has a reasonable suspicion of an individual or an entity, it will then seek a search warrant from a court so it

Oral Questions

can invade that person's privacy and obtain the documents. Instead of pursuing the normal court processes, the Conservatives are saying they are going to subvert all of that for the purposes of partisan gain.

This is what we do in a democracy: We stand up for judicial processes and we stand up for the Charter of Rights. We will always do that on this side of the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I was not able to hear all comments, but I did hear the comments from the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I will ask him not to take the microphone until he is recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up and corruption is off the charts. A fish rots from the head down. Is it any wonder that Liberal cronies appointed to the green slush fund by a Prime Minister twice convicted of ethics violations engaged in corruption? This was not small corruption. It was \$400 million.

Mr. Speaker, you ordered the production of these documents. Why will the Liberals not stop the cover-up and produce them?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has only been nine minutes since question period began, and slogans are up. Slogans are up again. Canadians are sick and tired of Conservatives repeating the same false things and the same slogans.

These Conservatives are trying to go after the personal files of employees and former employees. They are targeting SDTC today. Who will they target tomorrow?

On this side of the House, we stand up for democracy. We stand up for rights. We stand up for Canada.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty simple who we are targeting. We are targeting the corruption the Liberals enabled, the corruption they are hiding and the corruption they refuse to produce the documents for.

These are documents the Speaker ordered the production of, so Canadians should ask themselves why the Liberals are not producing them. They are not producing them because they are so damaging. The documents are so bad, they will destroy the government. Therefore, the Liberals have used up seven days of House of Commons time to hide their corruption.

They need to stop the corruption and produce the documents.

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the Conservatives are saying things that are false. The only party that has been putting up speakers for the past week is the Conservative Party, so it is the one filibustering its own motion.

Let us talk about why the Conservatives might be filibustering that motion. Rob Walsh, the former law clerk, said, “[In my humble opinion] it is an abuse of its powers for the House to use its power to demand”—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, it is so important for us to allow one speaker to speak at a time as we are in a large place with many members. It becomes difficult for those who require the use of their earpieces to hear the interpretation.

I am going to ask the hon. Leader of the Government to repeat her answer because there have been hand signals from members who were not able to hear her.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I notice the volume goes up when Conservatives do not want to hear the truth, so let us go back to that.

The only members of Parliament who have been debating this motion are Conservative members of Parliament. They are filibustering their own motion, and I can say why. It might have something to do with Rob Walsh, the former law clerk, who stated, “it is an abuse of its powers for the House to use its power to demand and get documents from the Government in order to transfer them to a third party...that wouldn't otherwise receive them or to compel the Government to give documents to the third party”.

The Conservatives want to get around the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and they are going after Canadians. Who is next?

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, La Presse reminded readers this morning that 15-year-old Meriem Boundaoui was killed by a stray bullet, that 16-year-old Thomas Trudel also died from a gunshot wound, that a 14-year-old teenager perished while attempting to commit arson in Beauce and that a French tourist and her seven-year-old daughter died in an arson attack while visiting Montreal.

Yesterday, the Minister of Justice blamed the Government of Quebec for all that, but all the problems being created right now can be traced back to the Liberal government. When will an election be called so we can fix this fiasco?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that we are working with the provinces to address the situations he described. We are having ongoing discussions with the police forces and the provincial ministers responsible for public safety. We will continue to give law enforcement the resources they need. The Conservatives cannot say

they did the same, because they cut funding to agencies like the CBSA and the RCMP.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during an interview this morning, the Montreal police chief clearly said that to solve Montreal's problems, he would need the laws and regulations to make it possible.

For the past nine years, all the government has done is pass bills like Bill C-5, Bill C-75, and Bill C-83.

These laws have left criminals free to roam the streets of Montreal and all the other communities in Canada. They have no fear of the justice system or the police. Will the government listen to the Montreal police chief? Will it change the laws back to what they were when the Conservatives held power?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, have invested in our borders and our police forces. We have also imposed tougher penalties for crimes like auto theft.

I mentioned this yesterday, but I will repeat it today: If anyone believes that bail is a problem, they should ask governments like Mr. Legault's about it. They should ask how many Crown prosecutors they have, how many police officers they have and how much space they have in their detention centres. Those are the answers we need to fix the problem.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister says we should not suggest to her that the Liberals are turning their backs on farmers.

Well, I am telling her straight out that they have turned their backs on farmers, specifically 6,000 agricultural producers in Quebec, representing over 100,000 jobs.

Why are the Liberals all talk and no action? The clock is ticking. Time is running out.

Speaking of independence, do they realize that, in the meantime, they are giving us some damn good reasons to seek it?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberals are 100% behind the supply management system and 100% behind our dairy, poultry and egg farmers.

Farmers really have two options, two real options for the future. They can choose a Liberal government that believes in the system and wants to protect it, or they can choose a second option that does not unanimously support supply management.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they have two other options: the maximum number of Bloc Québécois MPs or sovereignty. At this rate, as the government lurches from one failure to the next and continues to prove that it is unable to get anything done, soon it will be too late. Before long, even the NDP will not want to be seen with the Liberals.

Who is the boss in Canada: the Prime Minister or two unelected senators?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, my colleague talks about being unable to get things done. If there is anyone who is unable to get anything done for farmers and producers in Quebec, it is the leader of the Bloc Québécois, because he chose to be unable and to talk about sovereignty and independence instead of dealing with the urgent problems we are facing today.

The whole reason supply management exists is because there was a Liberal government at the time and there is a Liberal government now. If it had been a Conservative government and a Bloc government, supply management would be long gone.

* * *

• (1450)

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The Auditor General reported 186 conflicts of interest and over \$400 million in misspent funds that went to Liberal insiders. The Minister of Environment's former employer, Cycle Capital, received \$250 million from the green slush fund, all while over half of Canadian small businesses were losing money year over year.

Why is it okay for Liberals to enrich their friends while small businesses are struggling to stay afloat?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is not okay is for the Conservatives to repeat the same thing time and time again when they know it is false. The reality, and let us talk about facts, is that the entity they are talking about was created in 2001. It was managed by the Conservatives for nine years. The CEO of that organization is gone, the board is gone and the foundation no longer exists. That is the reality. What the Conservatives are about is going after ordinary Canadians, those who work at this organization. We are going to stand for democracy, we are going to stand for rights and we are going to stand for the work that needs to be done by the House.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada lost 9,037 businesses from May to June 2024, and 6,331 declared insolvency year over year. The closures we are witnessing right now have not been this large since the pandemic, when the entire country was shut down. While Canadian entrepreneurs and workers are struggling, business is still booming for Liberal insiders.

Why is the Prime Minister hiding behind the green slush fund documents, and when will he release them to Parliament?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to support small and medium-sized businesses. We are empowering entrepreneurs. We are increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption. We are investing in Canadian start-ups. We are boosting government procurement for small and medium-sized businesses and supporting indigenous entrepreneurs as well.

This also gives me the opportunity to announce that we have negotiated agreements with both Mastercard and Visa to lower interchange fees by up to 27%, which takes place as of October 19 of this year. We will continue to support small businesses.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of these NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. You yourself ruled that the government violated an order of the House to turn over evidence to the police for a criminal investigation into the latest Liberal scandal. The government's refusal to accept your ruling has paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside our work to address the doubling of housing costs, food inflation, crime and chaos.

Will the minister end the cover-up and give the proof to the RCMP so we can get Parliament working again for all Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the members opposite are saying is not true. Your ruling was very clear: because of the unprecedented nature of that motion, it should go to the procedure and House affairs committee for study. The RCMP and the Auditor General raised their extreme discomfort with the Conservative motion. Canadians should be concerned because the Conservatives are going after whoever they hold a political grudge against, and this could be them next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$400 million of taxpayers' money has ended up in the pockets of Liberal cronies.

At a time when Canadians are facing doubled rents, food insecurity and crime, Liberal corruption has taken over the parliamentary agenda. Here we are once again, paralyzed by the corruption and fiscal irresponsibility of this Liberal government.

Can the Liberals release the documents we requested so that the House can finally get back to work?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is talking about responsibility. Here is what the RCMP commissioner has to say about responsibility:

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

Does that make it any clearer? Do Conservative members need a briefing with the RCMP commissioner to understand what he has been saying for weeks now?

Oral Questions

• (1455)
[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, the honourable chiefs from the Prince Albert Grand Council are in Ottawa fighting for their people. In their communities, overcrowding and poor-quality housing are leading to mental, physical and social crisis. Tuberculosis, a disease that ran rampant during the residential school time, is on the rise again in indigenous communities. Children are dying.

Why has the government continued the decades-old Liberal and Conservative tradition of refusing to provide the needed funding to end this cycle?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way over the past nine years, the government has worked with first nations leaders, indigenous leaders across the country to restore rights, to restore self-determination and to restore funding that was under heavy attack from the Conservative Party of Canada. We have so much more to do together, including working on mental health, which the government continues to support first nations-led solutions for. We are going to continue this hard work with partners exactly like the ones who are here today.

* * *

LABOUR

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' misguided, one-size-fits-none return-to-office mandate is hurting workers and Canadians trying to access vital public services. This rushed mandate was done without due consultation, unfairly impacting dedicated workers.

Is this the Liberals' method of natural attrition or an underhanded attack on skilled public servants? We know Conservatives sure do not have workers' backs, but will the Liberals repeal this unfair mandate?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is exactly right. Conservatives do not have workers' backs, unlike this side of the House. Our top priority is to deliver quality programs and services to Canadians. We are committed to ensuring that our public servants are supported through this change to the directive on hybrid work. It is our expectation that departments work with their union management committees during the implementation phases that are before us. The clerk and the department heads will continue to monitor and work with the unions and the public service.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I stood alongside the Premier of Manitoba, federal colleagues and health care workers as we made a major investment of \$630 million in the province's health care system. After Conservatives in Manitoba decimated health care over a decade of cuts

and closures, this funding was desperately needed. The redevelopment of Portage Place is a generational project aimed at revitalizing the downtown core, in large part by establishing a new, state-of-the-art health care facility. It simply does not happen without federal support.

Can the minister for PrairiesCan outline how our government is supporting this significant redevelopment and what it means for the future of Winnipeg?

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, big things are happening in Winnipeg's downtown. Thanks to collaboration between the three levels of government, the private sector and the Southern Chiefs' Organization, we are revitalizing the core of our city to make it more livable for everyone. Despite calls by Conservative politicians to cut funding to PrairiesCan, we are making significant federal investments in the redevelopment of Portage Place to build more homes that people can afford, to build a new health care centre in the centre of downtown and to offer other public spaces. We are walking a new path together, and Winnipeegers are proud.

* * *

ETHICS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The corruption of the Liberal government knows no bounds. The Liberal Minister of Employment has continuously misled Parliament about his alter ego, the other Randy. Texts from his business partner reference a Randy, and we now know there was no other Randy involved in the fraudulent medical supply company while he was a sitting member of cabinet.

When will the minister come clean with Canadians, end this charade and resign?

• (1500)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner has looked into this matter three times and each time has confirmed he has no concerns.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine long years of the Liberal-NDP government, taxes are up, costs are up, corruption is up and apparently the number of Randys is up.

Oral Questions

The Minister of Employment has been accused of violating the law by engaging in improper business dealings with his corrupt, scandal-plagued partner. The minister claimed he was not involved in this business but was later forced to admit that he was. He should admit he is the other Randy and that he violated the law.

When will the minister come clean and admit to everyone what we all know?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the Ethics Commissioner has looked into this matter three times and each time has confirmed he has no concerns.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is now up.

The Liberal minister from Edmonton claimed he had no contact with his business partner during an alleged half-a-million-dollar fraud linked to the other Randy, but phone records and text messages now show the complete opposite. It seems the minister made a habit of bending the rules and using his influence to benefit his business partner, the same business partner that you, Speaker, have now found is in contempt of Parliament.

It is really simple. Will the minister admit the charade is up and then admit he broke the law and confirm that he is in fact the other Randy?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in case my hon. colleague did not hear my previous answer, as I stated, the Ethics Commissioner has looked into this matter three times and each time has confirmed he has no concerns.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fact one: PFLP is a listed terrorist entity. Fact two: Khaled Barakat was a member of PFLP when he founded Samidoun in 2012, and his wife, Charlotte Kates, incorporated Samidoun under Canadian law in 2021. Fact three: Under section 83.05 of the Criminal Code, any entity that “has knowingly acted on behalf of, at the direction of or in association with” a listed entity can be listed.

The facts are clear. The government's position is not. Why has the government not listed Samidoun as a terrorist entity on that ground?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's position has in fact been very clear. Decisions around listing terrorist entities are made based on the advice of security and intelligence officials. My colleague the parliamentary secretary made it clear yesterday that I have instructed the security and intelligence agencies that report to us to do, on an expedited basis, a review of these matters, and I have said we hope to come back to Canadians with information very soon.

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we demand that the government increase old age security for seniors between the ages of 65 and 74, the Minister of Seniors accuses us of saying no to seniors. However, he should know that the Bloc Québécois says yes to seniors. We say yes to retirees, yes to improving their living conditions and yes to putting an end to two classes of seniors. The minister is the one saying no. The only thing he has achieved since taking office is saying no to pension increases. His only achievement is saying no.

Why does he not join us in saying yes?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague and the entire Bloc Québécois that we know that they are saying yes.

However, they have also said no a lot too. They said no every time we increased support for seniors in Quebec and Canada. They like throwing numbers around. There are 2.4 million seniors who benefit from the guaranteed income supplement. We increased the GIS, and the Bloc Québécois voted against that.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is not the only one saying yes to seniors: 79% of the public is saying yes to increasing old age security for people 65 to 74. The House is saying yes. Seniors are saying yes. Seniors' groups are saying yes, including FADOQ, AQDR and AREQ, even the AREQ branch in Outaouais, the minister's region. They came to support us on the Hill. The minister stands alone. In his riding alone, he could help 12,000 people.

Will the minister wake up? Today it was LaSalle—Émard—Verdun; tomorrow it will be Gatineau.

• (1505)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have visited my colleague's beautiful region many times. I invite her and everyone else to come to the Outaouais region. While she is in Outaouais, she can explain, through the media or any other forum, to the 14,000 people benefiting from the federal Canadian dental care plan in her riding, Shefford, why she voted against that program.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, grocery prices are up and time is up.

Oral Questions

A year ago, the Liberals promised to lower food prices by Thanksgiving. All Canadians got were empty promises and empty stomachs. Now they are going to pay \$80 for a turkey this Thanksgiving. Food inflation in Canada is 37% higher than in the United States. Food insecurity is up 111% thanks to the NDP-Liberal carbon tax.

Will the NDP-Liberal government axe the carbon tax so Canadians can afford a Thanksgiving dinner?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that it is much cheaper to have Thanksgiving dinner in Shawinigan. I do not know where he is shopping for his turkey. I will invite him to my house in Shawinigan and he will find out it is a bit cheaper.

The reality of what this government has done has been said by all economists in Canada. The most significant thing was reforming competition in this country to have less concentration and more choice for consumers, which stabilized prices. In addition, the Conservatives should celebrate that we now have a grocery code of conduct in this country to bring more fairness and to stabilize prices in the country.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think many Canadians find the minister making fun of their struggles much of a joke, because the reality is that for many Canadians, buying a turkey for Thanksgiving is just a dream.

The Liberal-NDP government has made the Canadian dream a food bank nightmare. A million Canadians in just Ontario went to a food bank last year, up 25%, and now doctors are raising the alarm on scurvy in Canada because Canadians cannot afford basic nutrition.

Will the Liberal-NDP government make the Canadian dream come true and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, I am proud that in 2016 we introduced the Canada child benefit. There are 4.3 million families and over seven million children across this country who receive this benefit each and every month. That is \$547 a month for parents with children ages six to 18, or \$648 each month.

I got to speak recently with a new mom named Madeleine, who shared how impactful this is for her family. The position the Conservatives have—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government is astoundingly out of touch.

Over the past nine years, the cost of living has skyrocketed under this government. I urge the Liberals to come down from their ivory tower and visit a grocery store. Prices have gone up like crazy.

The Bloc Québécois consistently votes to keep this Liberal government in power. I am warning my Bloc friends not to take Quebecers for fools.

When will this Liberal government show some common sense and stop wasting the money of our country's honest citizens and workers?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see the Conservatives' hypocrisy. They talk about people in need, yet they oppose funding our community cafeterias and non-profits. They talk about people living on the street, yet they oppose investing to create more housing in this country.

They have a hidden agenda, and everything they say in the House is bunk.

* * *

● (1510)

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Montreal's east end is brimming with opportunities.

Last November, at the Sommet de l'Est, the minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions announced \$30 million in funding for local businesses and organizations as part of the initiative to support economic development in Montréal's east end.

Can the minister tell us how our government is supporting the east end's immense potential to become a leading hub of economic and social development in Quebec?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who also happens to be a colleague from the east end of Montreal, as I am.

Last week, I announced a call for social innovation projects in Montreal's east end. This is the first time that a \$1-million investment will support new social innovation projects that will result in economic and environmental spin-offs for the revitalization of Montreal's east end. I invite all companies to submit projects by November 29.

We are here to ensure that Montreal's east end is part of the economy of the future.

[English]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has all sorts of excuses for why it will not provide documents to the House or to the RCMP about the \$400-million spending scandal. The Liberals falsely claim it would violate privacy, that it would negatively impact the RCMP's investigation and that it would violate charter rights. The Constitution is clear: Parliament is supreme and Parliament has the lawful authority to order the production of documents.

Why is the government consistently trampling on the constitutional authority of this House?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was some incredible double-speak from my colleague across the way. The RCMP has said this:

...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...

There is significant risk that the motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes and Charter protections.

For a party that claims to respect the police, it certainly does not respect police independence.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms also includes sections 3, 4 and 5, which are about the democratic rights of Canadians. Canadians have the right to be democratically represented on the floor of this House. The majority of this House has demanded the production of documents related to the \$400-million spending scandal. We did the same thing with the Winnipeg lab documents.

Why does the government consistently ignore the democratic wishes of the people's elected representatives and deny this House documents?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member opposite because he usually stands up for institutions, including this place. What he is not standing up for right now is the independence of law enforcement in this country. The independence of law enforcement is pivotal.

What my colleague emphasized is that usually my friends opposite are listening to the police. This is what the deputy commissioner of the RCMP said on the news yesterday: "It is a very dangerous situation... [T]he rule of law is predicated upon a separation between what [Parliament is] doing and the law enforcement agencies, in this case the RCMP."

We are listening to RCMP commissioners and former commissioners. I wish the member opposite would do the same.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years, they have known Samidoun as a terror affiliate. On October 7, they chanted, "We are Hezbollah, and we are Hamas.

Oral Questions

Death to Canada, death to the United States, and death to Israel." They incited hate. They incited terror. They burned our flag.

Why does our foreign minister fail to act when Canada is threatened? She told Tom Mulcair that it is about the demographics of her voters.

Why does the minister put partisan politics over Canadian national security interests?

• (1515)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply concerned about the national security interests of Canadians. That is why we support the law enforcement agencies and security agencies that do this important work. That is why we rely on their advice to decide when the government, under the Criminal Code of Canada, should list a terrorist entity.

There is good news. These security agencies are constantly reviewing a whole series of organizations to determine if the threshold has been met. I talked to them as recently as this morning, and I am very confident that we will have some important news very quickly.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians work hard all year so they can take a vacation and visit their families. They want quality service from airlines. Last week, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of our government's approach to protecting Canadian air passengers.

Can the Minister of Transport share this wonderful news with us?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2019, we were the first government in Canadian history to introduce legislation to protect air passengers. It was the right thing to do.

Last week, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Canadians. They have rights. They deserve to be protected. They can count on our Liberal government. Unlike the Conservatives, we will always stand up for travellers and their rights.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Sudan now has the world's worst displacement of children anywhere, and 17 months into this devastating humanitarian crisis, not one single Sudanese Canadian loved one has gotten to safety in Canada. A family member in Vancouver was desperate to bring his sister and her two daughters to safety. With months of inaction, the sister has now perished. The two children are alone.

Will the minister expedite processing and expand eligibility of his restrictive program to include vulnerable children in Sudan?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows well that this plan was devised with community members and community organizations, and we worked hand in hand with them to put out this program to get 8,000 Sudanese people fleeing war. We plan to make sure these people get here, hopefully by the end of the year, with more next year. I will constantly be working with community members, who I will be meeting with as early as tomorrow, to evolve the program if need be.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have been asking questions in the House for over a year, and yet there is a completely ridiculous tax issue that has not been addressed.

Here is an illustration of the problem. When a person goes to Tim Hortons and buys six donuts, they do not have to pay tax, but if they decide to buy six healthy, sugar-free bars, they have to pay tax. That means that people are paying more for healthy products. This is harming our local businesses, which are facing unfair competition with multinationals.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he intends to ask his Minister of Finance to change this ridiculous situation?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to discuss this situation with my colleague several times. I understand that he cares a lot about this issue, and I also understand the problem. To fix this, the Department of Health and the Department of Finance would have to make some very substantial changes. This is something that we could look at in an upcoming platform.

• (1520)

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

During question period, the member for Outremont used unparliamentary language. I would ask her to withdraw her comment and apologize.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Outremont.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I think if you check, you will find that this word has been used in the past.

I would be happy to respond once the Chair has done the research.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the House leader said that Liberals were not participating in the current debate on Liberal corruption, and I just wanted to know if I could table the speeches from the member from Winnipeg—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member, unfortunately, does not have unanimous consent to be able to table that document.

[Translation]

Getting back to the point of order raised by the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, yes, I will review the transcripts. However, if I remember correctly, that word, as regrettable as it may be, has been used several times here in the House of Commons.

I will come back to the matter if necessary.

CONCURRENCE IN COMMITTEE REPORTS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:21 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

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

*(Division No. 869)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Ali	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault

Concurrence in Committee Reports

Boulerice	Bradford	Lloyd	Lobb
Bragdon	Brassard	Long	Longfield
Brière	Brock	Lotus (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Cannings	Caputo	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Carr	Carrie	Majumdar	Maloney
Casey	Chabot	Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Chagger	Chahal	Masse	Mathysen
Chambers	Champagne	May (Cambridge)	May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
Champoux	Chatel	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Chen	Chiang	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	McLean	McLeod
Cornier	Coteau	McPherson	Meillo
Dabrusin	Dalton	Mendès	Medicino
Damoff	Dance	Miao	Michaud
Dancho	Davidson	Miller	Moore
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Morantz	Morrice
Deltell	d'Entremont	Morrison	Morrissey
Desbiens	Desilets	Motz	Murray
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Muys	Naqvi
Dhillon	Diab	Nater	Noormohamed
Doherty	Dong	Normandin	O'Connell
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Oliphant	O'Regan
Drouin	Dubourg	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Duclos	Duguid	Pauzé	Perkins
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Plamondon	Poillievre
Ellis	Epp	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Rayes	Redekopp
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Reid	Rempel Garner
Ferreri	Findlay	Richards	Roberts
Fisher	Fonseca	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fortier	Fortin	Rogers	Romanado
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Rood	Rota
Freeland	Fry	Ruff	Sahota
Gaheer	Gainey	Sajjan	Saks
Gallant	Garon	Samson	Sarai
Garrison	Gaudreau	Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Gazan	Généreux	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Genuis	Gerretsen	Schiefke	Schmale
Gill	Gladu	Seeback	Serré
Godin	Goodridge	Sgro	Shanahan
Gould	Gourde	Sheehan	Shields
Gray	Green	Shiple	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Hallan	Hanley	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Hardie	Hepfner	Small	Sorbara
Hoback	Housefather	Soroka	Sousa
Hughes	Hussen	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hutchings	Iacono	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
Idlout	Ien	St-Onge	Strahl
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Stubbs	Sudds
Jivani	Johns	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Joly	Jones	Thériault	Therrien
Jowhari	Julian	Thompson	Tochor
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Tolmie	Trudel
Kelly	Khalid	Turnbull	Uppal
Khanna	Khera	Valdez	Van Bynen
Kitchen	Kmiec	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Koutrakis	Kram	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Vecchio	Vidal
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Vien	Viersen
Kwan	Lake	Vignola	Villemure
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Virani	Vis
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Vuong	Wagantall
Lapointe	Larouche	Warkentin	Waugh
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Webber	Weiler
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Wilkinson	Williams
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Williamson	Yip
Lemire	Leslie	Zahid	Zarrillo
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Zimmer	Zuberi — 330
Liepert	Lightbound		

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

* * *

• (1535)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-250, an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to sterilization procedures.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I wish to return to the point of order raised yesterday after Oral Questions by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country. In her intervention, the member alleged that the member for Cambridge had used language that was unparliamentary toward her. In response, the member for Cambridge rose to vehemently deny the accusation.

As I had not heard anything like this at that time, I endeavoured to review the matter and check if anything could be heard on the video or was included in the official Debates. After reviewing these records, I can confirm that nothing was found and that these words were not part of the record.

As is the case at times, long-established tradition dictates that I should take members at their word. Accordingly, this is what I will do in this instance.

All that is left for the Chair to do is to ask all members, as I have done time and time again, to avoid speaking and shouting at each other from across the floor. This will help keep the exchanges civil and dignified.

I thank all members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 44th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Cybersecurity of Personal Information in the Cloud”.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to table the Conservative Party's dissenting report to the 44th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Cybersecurity of Personal Information in the Cloud”.

The Auditor General noted in a report the many security breaches and the lack of seriousness on behalf of the government in addressing these issues. In response, the Liberals and the NDP put forward suggestions that were focused instead on the net-zero aspect of cybersecurity.

Therefore, Conservatives recommend the following in place of recommendations 5 and 6: “That, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat take immediate action to resolve the confusion between departments regarding roles and responsibilities for cyber security and finally lay out clear and concise mandates to departments involved in cyber security” and “That, in working to immediately address the failures as reported by the Auditor General, Public Services and Procurement Canada and Shared Services should prioritize the protection of personal information of Canadians and not pursue unrelated goals that are outside the core purpose of cybersecurity operations.”

• (1540)

[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I move that the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, presented on Tuesday, October 4, 2022, be concurred in.

I am pleased to start the debate on this report, which is entitled “Facial Recognition Technology and the Growing Power of Artificial Intelligence”. My constituents in Trois-Rivières regularly talk to me about these two topics. They are worried about these things. We hope to be able to shed light on this.

Over the past few years, facial recognition has become common. We like it when our iPhone recognizes us and every app can start opening up without us having to do anything. There is a catch, though. An iPhone recognizes a face, obviously, but who has read their iPhone's terms and conditions? Do users know what happens to the image that has been recorded? Do they know if they own their own image? What are the restrictions on the use of that image?

At the time of the study, those were the types of questions that got the committee interested in this topic. We are going to show that there are immense benefits to facial recognition. However, there are also some immense drawbacks. We are going to have to be able to weigh these types of things.

Routine Proceedings

Facial recognition has obviously improved over time. The report, which dates back to October 2022, is quite relevant. However, it must be said that since the emergence of generative AI, these kinds of tools have started developing more rapidly. It is getting hard to keep up. There are no real regulations governing the use of AI or facial recognition.

A few years ago, in February 2021, the Privacy Commissioner released an investigation in which he found that Clearview AI, a facial recognition company, had violated the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. Basically, what happened was that when shopping mall customers looked at the store directory screen, their image would be recorded and they would be tracked through the mall to monitor what they were doing in order to build profiles on them. The commissioner found that these practices violated the act.

Facial recognition is more than that. There is surveillance everywhere. Many things can be associated with facial recognition. To go a step further, I would like to propose a definition of facial recognition.

Facial recognition...is the process of identifying a face from a digital image or video. [Facial recognition technology] can be deployed in real time or on static images. It uses computer pattern recognition to find commonalities in images depicting human faces.

Obviously, it does not always work perfectly. Someone may have such a bad night that their iPhone does not recognize their face in the morning. It is not perfect.

However, we have to admit that although this technology does make our lives easier, it can also poison our existence. Several witnesses told us that this identification technology sometimes has a lower success rate among Asian people and people of colour. This is a problem if, for example, facial recognition is used by police to identify a witness or an accused person, and the wrong person is identified. Obviously, a 30% success rate for Asian people and people of colour is a bit low, so clearly, we need to be careful.

Facial recognition equals identity. Identity is how someone presents themselves to the world, how they relate to others. It is the most beautiful definition of otherness, and I am certain my colleagues in the room can easily appreciate that. Otherness is how we present ourselves to others. Our face is unique. Some may say that some faces are less so than others, but our face is unique. It is a valuable source of identification.

Have any of my colleagues in the House consented to their faces being used for commercial—

• (1545)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is a lot of noise coming from the lobby. Can someone look into that?

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, there are many different uses. Did people consent to those uses? Did they consent to being in an ad when they were walking down the street? Did they consent to having their image captured as they were getting on a bus in Trois-Rivières? Did they consent to their comings and goings being tracked? Did passengers arriving at Trudeau air-

port consent to being identified for their passport using facial recognition?

How is that data being used? Did people consent to that? Is that data protected? After the data leak at Desjardins, we have to wonder whether facial recognition data at risk too.

This is certainly something we need to work on. Unfortunately, the lack of regulations gives the bad guys a definite advantage. Those looking to sidestep regulations sometimes succeed, but it is complicated. However, if there are no regulations, then it is the wild west, really.

Let me give a few examples of the benefits that facial recognition technology has to offer. Daniel Therrien, the former privacy commissioner of Canada, said that facial recognition can be used to solve serious crimes, such as missing children cases. It can also be used for other compelling state purposes, such as in the border context to ensure that people of concern can be identified at the border while not impeding the flow of travellers to the country. Obviously, that is desirable. These kinds of uses are intended to protect us. I think we would all support them.

However, there are drawbacks, and they often concern mass surveillance. One thing is immediately obvious. Mass surveillance is definitely being done without a warrant. People are being surveilled at baseball games, on the bus and in the subway. Although the goal may be to identify a perpetrator, everyone is surveilled in the process. That is problematic.

As for the disadvantages, Patricia Kosseim, Ontario's information and privacy commissioner, told us that, with regard to facial recognition, the biggest concern of commissioners across Canada is mass surveillance, whether done by a third-party private sector company on behalf of the police or by the police service itself.

Assistant or deputy commissioners of the RCMP candidly told us that they were using facial recognition without a warrant and without letting the public know. Obviously, we can expect the RCMP to use facial recognition for legitimate, worthy reasons. However, the privacy commissioner also found that there had been serious and systemic failings to ensure compliance with the act before collecting personal information and before collecting information in general, for that matter.

I was talking about shopping malls a little earlier. I mentioned the buses in Trois-Rivières because facial recognition is used on them too. I think we need to be careful, because on top of the inherent bias against Asian people and people of colour, for example, criminal bias exists as well. Poor-quality cameras can produce images that lead to a person being incorrectly identified. In short, facial recognition is not foolproof.

Routine Proceedings

Now, our faces can be used for other purposes as well, including disinformation. We have started seeing videos on social media of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris kissing and partying together. They are public figures, but the same thing could happen to us. We could show up in a photo or video with someone who was never actually with us, doing something we never did.

We have to be careful. Disinformation is a serious problem today, one whose impact we often underestimate. All sorts of foreign actors can put information out there for all to see, thinking that they can convince people. Last week, I believe it was Tuesday, Communications Security Establishment Canada intercepted 6.6 billion attempts at disinformation in Canada. That is just another day at the office for the CSE.

The fact is that all of this information contributes to how we think. It may lead us to do things that we may not have done otherwise. That is a problem. Facial recognition is one many tools of disinformation.

● (1550)

There is another rather remarkable thing that is concerning. When it comes to the environment, we often hear talk of social licence. We need to be careful because social licence is a form of renunciation, for example, we would prefer A to B. Social licence does not necessarily equate to enthusiasm. However, there has never even been a debate about social licence or future social licence for facial recognition. It is assumed that, if we are in a public place, our face is part of the mosaic and that, if we did not want to be there, then we could just do nothing. In my previous career, people often told me that they had not done anything wrong and so it was no big deal if their image was being captured. I often answered those people by saying that, if they knew what could be done with those images, they might be more concerned. There are always malicious actors around, whether local or international.

The topic is not being discussed. We discussed it once with our colleagues on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. We discussed it with my hon. colleague from Barrie—Innisfil. However, these discussions have not necessarily filtered through to society as yet. Some groups have apprehensions, but no discussion is happening. Concerns are being raised, but that is not enough. Ultimately, we concluded that we should probably make a few recommendations. Given the total absence of any regulations, we had to at least come up with a few proposals that would make the use of facial recognition more transparent. I am going to quote a few of the 19 recommendations, including the first and foremost among them, which reads as follows:

That the Government of Canada amend...the *Privacy Act* to require a government institution to ensure that the practices [when using facial recognition]...are lawful.

We are talking about the Canada Border Services Agency, the passport office, a whole bunch of places like that. We figured that the Privacy Act had not been revised since before the Internet arrived on the scene, and that a little update would be in order. I am throwing this idea out to my colleagues on the other side of the House. All kinds of committee reports have been presented and, in its responses, the government often says that we have some good ideas. However, an intention without action is just an intention. It is worthless, even if it is a good one.

We also thought there should be clear sanctions for privacy violations committed by the police. After all, law enforcement agencies are among the biggest users of facial recognition. I am not blaming them; there are legitimate reasons for using it. However, when they do violate privacy, whether voluntarily or not, there should be clear sanctions. When an action has no consequences, people continue doing it because there is no cost, financial or otherwise. It becomes a habit.

The following is another one of our recommendations:

That the Government of Canada amend the Privacy Act to require that prior to the adoption, creation, or use of facial recognition technology, [the government] seek the advice...of the Privacy Commissioner...

The Privacy Commissioner needs to be consulted before a facial recognition tool is developed. This recommendation was made in 2022. In 2024, while Bill C-27 is being studied in committee, people are still questioning whether Canadians need to be protected. It is right there, in black and white, in the report. We have to protect citizens because this data is not always used for legitimate reasons, and even if it is used legitimately, it is often used without a warrant. We have to be careful. I think this is a serious warning. To illustrate how important this is, the fact is that two years later, we are still talking about it. There have been no conclusions and, in fact, the situation has sometimes been trivialized.

I want to talk about another interesting recommendation. It is not often discussed. It is the right to be forgotten. Someone might want to be removed from the network. The European Union adopted a similar recommendation. The right to be forgotten is the possibility of contacting an agency that coordinates everything in order to allow an individual to not be automatically identified on social media or to be forgotten if they want to disappear. This may seem odd in a time of influencers who take selfies every four seconds, but a person may not want to be on the web for very legitimate reasons. We want the government to require “service providers, social media platforms and other online entities operating in Canada to delete all users’ personal information after a set period following users’ termination of use”. This could include responses to polls, text messages a person sends, or photos in which they are identified. We would like to make it possible for this to be deleted.

I will not quote the other 16 recommendations. By the very nature of the recommendations that were made following a lengthy consultation with the Privacy Commissioner, provincial commissioners and stakeholders who promote facial recognition, as well as those who criticize its use, there was unanimous agreement that something had to be done. As we know, nature abhors a vacuum, and where there is nothing, the nothing gets filled with something. It is frustrating.

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• (1555)

Just before I close, I would like to quote a witness, Carole Pivovasan, from INQ Law. She said that we need to be careful, that we need to increase transparency, but that, if we are going to do it, we need to do it “with a scalpel, not an axe”. The idea is to be aware of this relatively new technology, which, after two years, is no longer all that new. We can benefit from it, as I have just outlined, and we can guard against the harms, particularly the ones I mentioned.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is worth noting that Canada, among our peer nations and others, is doing exceptionally well with regard to the technological advancement of things like AI and facial recognition. Through that advancement there is a responsibility of the different stakeholders, in particular government, to look for ways in which we can actually ensure that our laws and regulations are of benefit and provide the type of assurances that Canadians want to see. It does not matter where one lives in Canada; it is just the general feeling, I believe, that a vast majority have.

I wonder whether my colleague could provide his thoughts on the importance of Bill C-27, which is unfortunately still at committee. I would have liked to have seen it taken out of committee months ago.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North, who always has such relevant questions. I like to hear him talk about responsibility. Responsibility is a very important concept in society. For the record, it comes from two Latin words, *res*, meaning “things” and *spondere*, meaning “to promise”. The responsible person is the one who can promise things. In this case, we are talking about the government.

Privacy commissioners have been stressing out for many years recommending that our privacy legislation be modernized or updated. Yes, there are interesting AI developers out there and leaders in certain types of facial recognition, but they are delinquent when it comes to protecting personal information. Bill C-27 sets out some interesting improvements. However, if the bill had been split the right way from the start, the privacy part would have already been accepted.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for moving this motion in the House today.

The report in question was tabled in the House in 2022, but AI technology has come a long way since then. Canada may now be lagging behind when it comes to privacy laws.

One of the Privacy Commissioner's recommendations involved the need to update our privacy laws. He said that privacy is not recognized as a fundamental right in our legislation.

Does my colleague agree with me and with the Privacy Commissioner that the Privacy Act needs to be updated now?

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, with whom I have the pleasure of working on the Standing Com-

mittee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, which he chairs brilliantly.

It is interesting, because the Privacy Commissioner is proposing that privacy be considered a fundamental right, and I completely agree with that.

What struck me recently when I reread the 2022 report is that the recommendations that were made seemed quite far-reaching at the time. Today, these recommendations are less than the minimum required for living together. The government did not take any action and did not treat privacy as a fundamental right, and when it comes to protecting information, it is dead last. We therefore need to make a real change.

Bill C-27 does not treat privacy as a fundamental right.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate working with the hon. colleague. As an ethicist, he brings subject matter expertise that is often lacking in terms of the nuance of these critical discussions, particularly around technology that many of us have only really scratched the surface on. He will recall, in talking about the strength of the recommendations, two recommendations in particular. One was recommendation number 18, which was unanimously passed by the committee, that the Government of Canada impose a federal moratorium on the use of facial recognition technology by federal policing services and Canadian industries unless implemented in a confirmed consultation with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. What we came to find, and I am sure the hon. member will recall and perhaps can expand on this, is that this was the Wild West. Departments were using this technology without any kind of formal privacy impact assessments, there was no contemplation by the Privacy Commissioner.

Could he please reflect on the need, two years later, for the government to honour our committee's call for a moratorium on this technology?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Hamilton Centre is right about something. I will make an observation before answering his question.

This is a multi-party committee, and we have representatives from three parties here to discuss this report. That worries me a great deal, because the government party is not here. Recommendation 18, which called for a moratorium—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that we do not mention whether members are present or absent in the House.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

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Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I am going to refer to my colleagues who are here with me. We are capable of defending things.

As for the moratorium we were talking about, I remember the witnesses who came to tell us about their tragic stories and the injustices they suffered. I am repeating myself but, at the time, we thought we were taking the bull by the horns. However, we need to go even further than what is being presented now. We must act. We must try as best we can to correct the injustices that are still being committed today due to the lack of regulation.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the report presented by my colleague today is very important and thought provoking. I want to analyze it a bit further.

In 2023, during an interparliamentary exchange in Edinburgh, I had the pleasure of speaking with AI specialists who told us that it is critical that we create legislation and that even the major AI producers are asking for laws.

Image capture can now be coupled with AI and a desire to misinform the population for political purposes. Foreign interference is troubling, and I find myself wondering whether the combination of capturing images and using AI is facilitating foreign interference. Does this not become a direct threat to democracy? How can we quickly put an end to this threat?

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I will take advantage of my hon. colleague's question to seize on some of the many topics that she raised.

These include facial recognition, foreign interference, and disinformation. Recently, in committee, a witness told us something that stuck with me. He said that one country in the world is disinformation-proof, and that country is Finland. The Finns live next door to the Russian bear, and they are no strangers to disinformation.

In 2014, however, they made two decisions. They decided to have schools teach critical thinking so that people could make what I would call reasonably enlightened choices. They also decided to bolster independent media by strengthening their independence and freedom. The two conditions for countering disinformation were therefore education and strong media.

I am forced to concede that here, in Canada, these things are somewhat lacking. It saddens me, because I have not seen many places that teach critical thinking, even to young children. Right now, all we see are local media crumbling and collapsing. We have become fertile ground for disinformation, especially when it is spread by malicious foreign actors.

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, the hon. member did speak about having a rights-based approach to data, the idea of data sovereignty in an era of what is essentially data capitalism, the commodification of personal information for sale and profiting by private corporations.

I would like the hon. member perhaps to reflect upon the discourse we had at committee, particularly around the right to be forgotten, having individual privacy for consumers to be protected in

law in order that they can erase information that might be present about them on the Internet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, surveillance capitalism is one of the fastest-growing industries today. If our permission is not being sought to collect our data, then it should be. In any case, we should be able to be forgotten. That is not a bad thing. The right to be forgotten is an essential part of any future privacy legislation.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on an issue that I know is very important to all Canadians. I wanted to make note of a couple of things before I really get under way. When we think of the Internet, I think that we need to put it into the perspective of how things have changed over time in a very significant way. I would suggest that applies more to the industry of technological changes related to the Internet and computers: it is virtually second to none, and it is something we all need to be much aware of. It is an issue our constituents are very concerned with. I think, at the end of the day, we need to recognize just how much things have changed and the importance of governments to show that not only do they understand the issue, but they also have taken tangible actions in order to address the many different concerns out there.

I will start off by saying there are a number of pieces of legislation that are all related to that technological change. If we canvass Canadians, we will find that there is a wide spectrum of ways they use the internet. There are many benefits to it, and there are many drawbacks.

The legislative agenda that we have put forward and advanced over the last number of years deals with both sides: How important it is to have a framework that enables us to protect, for example, the marketplace; and how important it is that we have laws that protect the victims of the abuse that takes place over the Internet.

I would like to cite three pieces of legislation and where they are at today. It is not necessarily because of the government's will to constantly push opposition members in trying to get through the legislation, but I believe that these are the types of legislation that a vast majority of Canadians would ultimately support. I can make reference to the issue of protection, for example. I think there have been four concurrence reports from the Conservative Party, this is either the second or third from the Bloc and I know the New Democrats have done a concurrence report. This is all during government business. Then we have had the issue of the matters of privilege. No Conservative is standing up saying, "Why are we doing these concurrence reports when we should be dealing with the privilege?" This is because the privilege is actually being used as a tool to prevent the discussion of legislation.

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Why is that important to highlight right now? It is because one of the pieces of legislation we have been trying to push out of second reading is Bill C-63, the online harms act. That is a piece of legislation that ultimately protects individuals and our communities from inappropriate behaviour taking place on the Internet and creating victims. These are the types of things to which I question, what role does government have? This particular report raises a number of concerns on the impacts of AI and facial recognition. Imagine all the images on the Internet today that Canadians do not want on the Internet.

• (1610)

I am thinking of a breakup where one spouse is, without the consent of the ex, putting inappropriate pictures on the Internet. Bill C-63 is legislation that addresses an issue of that nature, yet it continues to be frustrated in terms of getting through the House of Commons on second reading. However, I know that a majority of members of Parliament who are sitting in the House of Commons actually support Bill C-63.

We have Bill C-26, which deals with the important issue of cybersecurity. When we think of cybersecurity, we can imagine the data banks out there collecting information and how critical that information is. We are defending and supporting Canadians, where we can, through issues related to privacy and the potential leak of data bank information.

There was a time when a data bank was paper-driven, and the shredders might have had good business at the time. I remember going into an embassy where I saw containers full of correspondence. Containers are disappearing as more and more things are becoming digital, and that applies in many different forms. In literally seconds, millions of data points can actually be lost and ultimately acquired by someone who might have malicious intent. However, we are still waiting for Bill C-26 to ultimately get that royal assent, not to mention Bill C-27.

Bill C-27 has a great deal to do with what we are talking about today. I think members need to fully understand, when we look at how important this issue is, that the last time we actually had a modernization of the acts that are in question, and I am referring to Bill C-27, was back in 2000, over 20 years ago, when iPhones did not exist. Can members imagine a time where iPhones did not exist? I can, and it really was not all that long ago.

When I was first elected, when I turned on the computer, the first thing I heard was a dial tone, a ding-dong, and then I was logged on to the Internet type of thing, and it took quite a while to get that connection. People used five-and-a-half-inch floppy disks. However, from 1995 to 2001, we really started to see an explosion of Internet advancement and technology, and it continues today.

• (1615)

Let us think about where the government has put its investments. It is not only toward protecting Canadians, but toward ensuring that communities have access to the Internet because of how critical it is to all of us.

We can look at one of the largest expenditures in my own province of Manitoba, which expanded broadband Internet into rural communities. It is being financed through the Canada Infrastruc-

ture Bank. Ironically, it is the same Canada Infrastructure Bank that the Conservatives say is doing nothing and has no projects. The leader of the Conservative Party has said he is going to get rid of the Infrastructure Bank. However, in Manitoba, we have seen the Internet expand through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

The Internet is an absolutely essential service today. Back in the late eighties and going into the nineties, some might have said it was an option. Today, it is not an option. The year 2000 was the last time the act was updated. For almost a decade, Stephen Harper chose to do absolutely nothing to protect individuals' identifications from being consumed through the Internet.

This government, for a number of years, has been looking at how we can modernize the protection of Canadians through the Internet and how we can maximize the benefits of the Internet, while minimizing harms to society. Those are the types of initiatives the Government of Canada has been taking to show, in a very real and tangible way, whether with legislative or budgetary measures, that it understands the technology. We are going to continue not only to be there but also to invest in it. It is one of the reasons that Canada virtually leads the rest of the world in many areas, especially on AI and facial recognition. It is because we understand, looking forward, the role that they are going to play.

That is why it is so important to bring forward legislation and, ultimately, look across the way. In a minority situation, we need a sense of co-operation coming from all opposition parties. It does not take a majority of members to prevent things from happening in the House. All it takes is one political party. Any political entity in the House that has 13 or 14 members can cause a great deal of frustration, even though a majority inside the House might want to see actions taken. In the last federal election, a minority government was elected, but that does not take responsibility away from all political parties to take the actions necessary to support what is in the best interests of Canadians.

That is why I am standing up to speak to the report, which had a lot of work. I was not at the committee, but I can assure everyone that a great deal of effort would have been put into coming up with the report.

• (1620)

Having read some of the comments provided by the minister's office in response to the report, obviously the government has taken the report very seriously. If members want to get an appreciation for the content of the report, I would encourage them to take a look at it. They should also look at the response the government has provided to the report. I suspect that if they were to take a look at the response, they would find that once again, much as in the many comments I have put on the record thus far, we have a government that understands the issue and the report and has taken action, not only today but previously, to deal with the concerns being raised.

Routine Proceedings

All we need to do is take a look at Bill C-27. In his response, even the minister made reference to Bill C-27. If members are genuinely concerned about the report, they should be sympathetic to at least allowing Bill C-27 to get out of committee. Why would that not happen? I can assure members, contrary to what the member across the way said, that as a government, we are constantly listening to Canadians. That is why we will find within our measures, whether they are legislative or budget measures, the thoughts and ideas of the people of Canada being reflected.

The Speaker's constituents, my constituents and all of our constituents are genuinely concerned about what is happening on the Internet today. To amplify that fact and the need for change, I quickly made reference to the year 2000, when we last had legislation. We had a big gap when absolutely nothing was done. I call that the Stephen Harper era. Then we had a government replace that era and it immediately started to work with Canadians to get a better understanding of the types of legislation and regulations that are necessary.

The best example that I can come up with, because of the explosion of iPhones out there today, is the issue of Facebook and how many people participate in Facebook. How many people own an iPad or iPhone or are on Facebook, Instagram or the many other social media, which did not exist in 2000? None of them existed. If that is the case, as I stated, I think a good question to pose is why there is resistance to supporting what Canadians want to see. Why would anyone oppose the framework legislation that we are bringing forward that would protect the interests of Canadians?

As I said, it is not like the Internet is an option nowadays. Today, it is an essential service. People will go to the Internet for a wide spectrum of reasons, whether it is streaming a favourite show from the past or something more recent, or looking at issues related to health conditions. I am always amazed at how the general knowledge of the population continues to grow on health-related issues.

• (1625)

That area has great potential, and it will incorporate AI and facial recognition. Non-profit and private organizations and even governments will use the Internet as a tool to deliver health care services and provide health care advice. Many people are taking that up and looking into it. That is one of the reasons that people will be living longer lives in the future. It is endless. That is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are debating a report that was presented by the ethics committee on a study it did in 2022 about facial recognition and the advancement of artificial intelligence. One issue that has come up is that the technological advancements in AI are having an impact on the spread of disinformation and misinformation. They are also affecting and impacting the privacy rights of Canadians.

One thing the Privacy Commissioner has talked about frequently at the ethics committee is the need to update the Privacy Act to ensure that privacy is a fundamental right for all Canadians. I am wondering what the member's opinion is on that and whether the government has any plans to update the Privacy Act to recognize that privacy is a fundamental right.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question and especially that it is coming from a Conservative member.

He is asking us what thoughts we have in regard to legislation. I made reference in my comments to Bill C-63, the online harms act. I made reference to Bill C-26, which deals with cybersecurity. I made reference to Bill C-27, which deals with updating a framework so that we have regulations that address many aspects of the report.

The biggest barrier is not a lack of ideas or legislation. The biggest barrier is, in fact, the Conservative Party of Canada, which continues to prevent legislation from ultimately becoming law. On the one hand, the Conservatives talk about the importance of privacy for Canadians and the importance of cyber-related issues, but when it comes time to advance legislation, they are found wanting. If my colleague believes that we should have legislation, I would encourage him to allow legislation to get through.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think we need to take note of something in this debate and that is the fact that Canada is lagging behind when it comes to legislation to regulate AI.

Whether we like it or not, AI is advancing, progressing, and we do not have a regulatory or legislative framework. We cannot always blame someone else. This is our own fault because we have been slow to face these challenges.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities conducted a study on the effects of AI on the labour market. It was very interesting. We heard from experts who said that such a framework was needed. In 2023, the European Union agreed on a legislative framework.

It is the government's responsibility to put forward ideas to ensure that these issues are resolved once and for all. The government needs to be proactive.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member to the extent that it is the responsibility of government. At the end of the day, what we have seen is a responsible government that has brought a number of legislative measures to the floor of the House of Commons. Once we bring them to the floor of the House of Commons, there is a responsibility of all members to recognize them.

The member says that we should have a framework. Bill C-27 is in part a framework that would allow for regulations. Those are the types of things we should be trying to get through the House of Commons so Canada, which does an incredible job on the responsible advancement of AI and facial recognition, would be allowed to continue to do so and so the government would be able to keep up with the advancement in a very responsible way.

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Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the most asinine things about being in debates, particularly with the Liberal government, is that its members pretend they are not in power. They pretend they could get things done if only there were somebody who could take the 18 recommendations that were supported by its members. Two-thirds of them do not require legislation.

The hon. member has taken up all the time and has not allowed any of the backbenchers to speak. Hopefully he prepared for the debate. Which of the 18 recommendations has his government acted on over the last two years?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have news for the member opposite. He did not necessarily need to put that question to me; all he had to do was just read the response from the government. I did not write the response, but the member could read it. It is a 12-page response to the recommendations, and he would become much more familiar with the manner in which the government has taken action.

The member blindly made a statement that the recommendations do not require legislation, but there are certain aspects of the report that do require some changes. That is why I made the suggestion that we need to continue to advance and push important legislation, and I cited three examples of that. If the member had been listening to what I was saying, he might have been a little more supportive. I must thank the NDP members for the support they give us.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. member, and again I must thank him for his diligence and his ability, quite frankly, to speak to the House on so many different matters that come before it.

This has all been litigated before. The ethics committee produced a report that was well thought out and well written. Why we have to rediscuss it escapes me. Maybe there are a few things the hon. member would like to put on record at this time.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect there is no one in the chamber who has read all the reports. There are literally pages and pages of concurrence reports, hundreds of reports. There are actually more reports than there are sitting days left.

The issue is important, as are other issues raised through concurrence reports. There is no doubt they are important, but they are never important enough to raise on opposition days. The issues are raised only on government business days, which seems to be a way to prevent us from being able to talk about, for example, Bill C-63, the online harms act, which would advance something our constituents want.

My Conservative friends specifically, instead of playing party politics and trying to serve themselves, should be thinking about serving Canadians by dealing with the legislative agenda and allowing for it to move forward.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has been talking about Bill C-27 for a while now.

I have a simple question. This bill is not just about AI. It is also about a whole host of other things. However, the subject of AI is important enough to be examined on its own, in its entirety, seriously and without the distraction of other equally important subjects. Perhaps we should focus on one topic in particular and explore it in depth rather than just superficially. That would be a nice change.

Is the government prepared to implement a bill that would seriously consider artificial intelligence in terms of its current importance?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, where there is opportunity to bring in legislation and get it through the House of Commons, the government is definitely interested in it. AI and facial recognition is a very serious issue. We have treated it as a serious issue and will continue to do so. The whole responsible advancement of technology on the issue is so critical to our country—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, National Defence; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

What we are doing here today is something called a concurrence debate. It relates to a report that was actually submitted to the House in October 2022, two years ago, on the topic of facial recognition software. This might seem like a very niche topic, but it is really not. Facial recognition software has become pervasive in use, especially here in Canada, and the report provided a set of recommendations on safeguards that could be used to protect Canadians' privacy and their data, as well as to prevent negative social impacts such as the use of facial recognition software to do things like racially profile people from marginalized groups.

The report had some pretty clear recommendations. It was issued in October 2022, and the government abjectly has failed. It has let two years go by without implementing a single one of the recommendations to protect the health, safety and privacy of Canadians. I want to talk about what the government is going to say that it did in response to the report, and then debunk it.

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The government tabled a bill, Bill C-27, which has two components. It has some content with regard to privacy and some content with regard to artificial intelligence. The problem with the bill is that virtually every type of civil society group, as well as academics and businesses, has panned both components of the bill for a variety of reasons. Many members of the House have asked for the bill to be split so that the two very disparate topics could be studied separately. The government has refused to do that. Most importantly, the bill contains absolutely nothing on facial recognition, absolutely nothing that materially addresses the recommendations in the report.

That is why when the Liberals stand up and talk about this, they have to dance around the issue. My colleague from the NDP rightly asked how many of the recommendations had been put in place. The answer is zero.

I am going to outline what the key failures of the bill are and then what the impacts of that are on Canadians. This is not necessarily a front-burner issue, but I think it was really important that the report was brought forward today, because it is something Canadians should be concerned about.

There are problems with unregulated use of facial recognition. I know this can sound really technical for some people, but I have to explain how pervasive it is. If someone were to walk into a shopping centre today, there is absolutely nothing stopping that shopping centre from using high-definition cameras to capture their every move, capture their biometric data, attach it to other profiles that the person might have with other companies and then use that information to make a profile on them about what they can afford and how they could be targeted for advertising. In really bad cases, they could be targeted for negative security experiences.

This is a very pervasive technology. Basically, anywhere there is a camera, facial recognition software can be and is likely being used. It is being used not just by the private sector; it is also being used by governments, and there are almost no limits on what the Liberal government can do with facial recognition software in Canada today. That is highly problematic for several reasons.

First of all, it is a massive invasion of Canadians' privacy; many times, they do not even know it is happening. That is because of the lack of regulation. The failure of the government to address the recommendations and put regulations into Bill C-27 means that Canadians' privacy is at risk. They do not have the ability to consent to when and how facial recognition software can apply to them. The second thing is that this opens them up to big-time data misuse.

As I said in the shopping centre example, there is really nothing preventing a shopping centre from selling biometric data and putting together a broader profile on somebody to be used for any purpose, without that person's ability to reject it on moral grounds. Under the fundamentals of privacy in Canada, we should have the right to reject it. I would almost argue that it is a human right.

The other problem is that it can lead to discrimination and bias. Many studies have shown that facial recognition software actually treats people of colour differently, for a wide variety of reasons. Of course that is going to lead to discrimination and bias in how it is being used. There should be restrictions on that to maintain

Canada's pluralism, to ensure equality of opportunity and to ensure that people of colour are not discriminated against because of a lack of regulation. To reiterate, none of these things are in Bill C-27.

● (1640)

The unregulated use of facial recognition software, because the government failed to regulate it in Bill C-27, can also lead to suppression of speech. Let us say that a government wanted to use facial recognition software to monitor people on the street. There would then be, within different government departments, some sort of profiles on who people are, what they do or what their political beliefs are. If government officials see them and maybe a few of their friends coming from different areas and walking to a gathering spot, that could, in theory, be used to disrupt somebody's right to protest. There are absolutely no restrictions on that type of use by government in Bill C-27.

We can also see how facial recognition could be used by the government for extensive overreach. Many members of this place will talk about wrongful convictions with respect to facial recognition software. There have been cases where facial recognition software was used to lead toward an arrest or a warrant. Because there are not clearly defined limits or burdens of proof for the use of the technology, it can lead to wrongful arrests and convictions as well.

It leads to a loss of anonymity. I think we have the right to be anonymous, certainly in this country, but that right has been breached without even any sort of debate in this place, because the government has failed to put the regulations into Bill C-27.

Frankly, the lack of regulations, particularly on government use of facial recognition technology, also means that there is a lack of our ability as legislators to hold the government to account on whether or not it is overreaching. Because we do not have the requirement in law for governments to be transparent about how they are using facial recognition software, we cannot in this place say whether there has been an overreach or not. It is very difficult to get that information.

To be clear, Bill C-27 has been panned at committee by civil liberties groups and civil society groups because of three things: It fails to define "biometric function" as sensitive data, fails to provide clear restrictions on when and how businesses and government can use facial recognition technology, and fails to provide adequate safeguards for individuals, especially regarding consent and the potential for discriminatory outcomes. The bill is a failure. It should have long been split, as has been the request of multiple parties of this place.

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Furthermore, the reality is that we have not had the debate in the House of Commons on what the guidelines should be for facial recognition technology. What the government has proposed to do in Bill C-27 is to take that out of this place, this vital debate, and put it in the hands of some Liberal-controlled regulator to be determined behind closed doors, with big tech companies, not us, setting the boundaries on that. That is wrong.

I want to talk about what the government has done. First of all, it has put unfettered use of facial recognition software out into the public. It has failed to define it in Bill C-27. Then it went one step further. Bill C-63, the government's massive draconian censorship bill, would go one step further in putting a chill on Canadian speech. It is another layer of Canada's loss of privacy, Canada's loss of speech and Canadians' loss of rights.

When the government stands up and talks about Bill C-63, the draconian censorship bill, as somehow being a response to facial recognition technology, this is not only laughable; it should strike fear into the heart of every Canadian. All of these factors combine to really put a chill on Canadians' privacy, their right to assembly, their right to freedom of speech and their right to live their life without government intrusion or the intrusion of merchants who might be using their biometric data to sell it to other companies.

It is just insane that Canada has not acted on this. We know that the Liberal government has not acted on it because it is in chaos right now. It has so many scandals, spending crises and ethical breakdowns. However, the one thing it has been focused on is censorship. That is because it does not want Canadians to hold it to account.

I am very glad that the report is being concurred in in the House. I find it an abject failure of the Liberal government that it has not acted on the recommendations, which, frankly, are non-partisan and should have been put into law a long time ago.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have just seen a demonstration of what Stephen Harper did, which was absolutely nothing for modernization whatsoever. In fact, it is a continuation of that because the Conservatives still do not want anything to do with it. That is the reason why they do not even advance the legislation.

The member was just critical of Bill C-63. In essence, Bill C-63 says that, if someone's partner or ex puts inappropriate pictures on to the Internet without their consent, that is wrong. They should not be able to do that.

The Conservative Party says, "Who cares?" It is not even going to let Bill C-63 be debated to get it to the end of second reading. It will never make it to committee if it is left up to the Conservative Party. They are stonewalling it. They are taking a Stephen Harper approach to the issue, and that is to do nothing but complain.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, it was former prime minister Harper's government that introduced legislation to stop revenge porn. That was the first law that passed in the House of Commons in response to many terrible incidents. That was a Conservative bill that was passed. Bill C-63 does not do that.

The bill that would do what the member opposite was talking about is a bill that I wrote, Bill C-412. My bill, Bill C-412, would protect people from the non-consensual distribution of intimate images created by artificial intelligence. It includes a digital restraining order for women who are being stalked by people online and a regulated duty of care for how online operators must treat children. We would do all of that without a \$200-million bureaucracy, which C-63 proposes, and without a massive impingement on Canadian speech through the reiteration of section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

We in opposition did what the government should have done a long time ago. I am very proud of that. I am proud of my caucus colleagues. It is more of what Canadians can have, with the hope that they can look forward to when the Conservatives form government after the next election.

• (1650)

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, we need to get back to who is watching the watchers. What is going on with the instructional handbook of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? It is bizarre what is happening with this regime, but we have seen this before. Failing regimes during their dying days always reach for the power of the state, the fist of the government to crush opposition. I think there are some similarities with what the government is doing right now with censorship in Bill C-63 and all the censorship bills the government is trying to use to control our society.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that. Is this a failure of the government to react to this report, which clearly spells out some recommendations?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, the government has failed on the fronts that my colleague mentioned in two ways: action and omission. On action, the government has censored Canadians through Bill C-11, which has had a massive effect on YouTube creators, censoring who gets seen and who does not. Bill C-18 has resulted in a news ban for online media platforms, so Canadians cannot get the news. It has also put many newsrooms out of work, so now the government cannot be held to account. Now the government is proposing Bill C-63, which will lead to a kangaroo court, wherein any Canadian could be dragged through with vexatious complaints based on their political opinions.

As well, through omission, by not putting limits on facial recognition software, the government can overreach and use Canadians' biometric data without any limitation. All of that leads to a police state, a censorship state, and something that every Canadian, regardless of political stripe, should be absolutely opposing with every fibre of their being.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there is no paranoia there. One has to wonder about the collection of little dots put here and there to try to spook or scare Canadians.

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Government can actually be a valuable resource in supporting Canadians. Would the member not agree that government does a lot of good?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I wish I had five hours.

I will just say this: Bill C-18 is one small example of what the government has done. Bill C-18 has resulted in the complete decimation of Canada's media ecosystem. There is virtually no local reporting. There is a ban on sharing news on social media platforms.

The government wants an ill-informed, censored population so that it cannot be held to account.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak today.

I thank my colleague for pronouncing my riding name so well. She did a very good job. Above all, she has a wealth of experience, having been a minister in a previous government, which did a great deal for technology, among other things.

We are talking about a report on facial recognition technology that was tabled two years ago. The reality is that the government has had two years to act on the report's recommendations. Unfortunately, it has done nothing.

Many of our colleagues here have talked about Bill C-27. I have the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, which is responsible for Bill C-27. It is important to understand that facial recognition is nowhere to be found in Bill C-27. It is a bill on artificial intelligence and privacy, but there is not a single line in that bill that talks about facial recognition.

I would like to review the chronology of events surrounding Bill C-27. This is important, because it gives us one more opportunity to consider how the government operated. Earlier on, my colleague from Winnipeg North said it was transparent and proactive, that it was doing lots of things, that it had introduced bills, and that it was holding consultations. I have news for him: On June 16, 2022, two and a half years ago, Bill C-27 was introduced for first reading here in the House. On November 4, 2022, six months later, we debated it at second reading. The bill reached the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology on April 24, 2023, another six months later. However, Bill C-27 was delayed when other government legislation was given extended consideration, including Bill C-34 and Bill C-42. Therefore, to some degree, the government deliberately delayed consideration of the bill.

During the study of Bill C-27, we heard from numerous witnesses. We learned that 300 groups had been consulted. The problem is that they were consulted after the bill was introduced, not before. Surely, if the minister had consulted the organizations beforehand, he might have been able to include something about facial recognition in his bill. It is good to hold consultations, and we have absolutely nothing against that. It is an important thing to do, but ideally, it should be done before the bill is introduced, to avoid situations like the one we are in now, namely that we are still debating Bill C-27 at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. I

think there are roughly 250 amendments, including 55 amendments that the government moved to its own bill. How can such a thing happen? How can the government introduce a bill and then move 55 amendments a year and a half or nearly two years later? Someone somewhere must have done a bad job drafting the bill if, after introducing it, the government ended up consulting 300 groups and moving 55 amendments. We call that working backwards.

On September 26, 2023, we began studying Bill C-27, and we heard from the industry minister, who, we know, is an excellent salesman. I will give him that. Since the member for Winnipeg North told us to try to say nice things about what the government is doing, I will do just that. The government has an excellent Minister of Industry. He is a good salesman. I have no doubt he could "sell fridges to the Eskimos". It is incredible. That said, I think that as the bill progressed, the minister was put in a position where he should have backed down, in a sense.

• (1655)

Contrary to what my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou said earlier, Bill C-27 does not cover a whole slew of topics. It covers two: artificial intelligence and privacy. The part of the bill on privacy is what we are debating right now. The progress of Bill C-27 has been hampered because the Liberals want to establish a tribunal, even though no other country in the world has done that. We do not want this bill to establish a tribunal. There are already other authorities that could do this work, such as the Privacy Commissioner. We do not want to create an additional authority because that would require additional funds.

We also want Bill C-27 to move forward. The minister keeps telling us that Mr. Bengio from the University of Montreal is the father of AI in Canada and basically in the world. When Mr. Bengio appeared before the committee, he said that we needed to act quickly. We want to, but the reality is that the bill is ill-conceived. The very first witnesses who appeared before the committee told us that this bill is poorly designed.

First, artificial intelligence should have been addressed in a separate bill rather than bundled together with privacy, even though we agree that these two topics have elements in common. That does not necessarily mean that the two topics needed to be addressed in the same bill.

We moved several amendments to this bill. I must say that the committee is working collaboratively. In some committees, there are attacks, it is very politicized, it is very political and it is very partisan. I must say that at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, we all work very collaboratively. We try to move bills through as quickly as possible, but in the case of Bill C-27, that was unfortunately not possible.

Other events took place in 2023 and 2024. I think we have done an amazing job. At committee, many witnesses came to talk about artificial intelligence itself, and their testimony was very interesting. One witness in particular surprised us a bit. They practically said that we are facing a third world war, a technological war that will be fought not with weapons, but with AI. We were a bit shaken when the witness told us that. We thought they were being a bit alarmist, but the reality is that we heard very solid arguments from the experts from across Canada who also appeared at committee on this topic, at the invitation of the various political parties.

Europe has just passed legislation on artificial intelligence. Here in Canada, if the government had been willing, this bill could have been split up to separate the two subjects. We could still do that. Right now, we could limit ourselves to resolving the issue of AI, in line with what just passed in Europe and what is about to pass in the United States. Their bills have been studied extensively. Quebec already has a law in effect, Bill 25. It is not fully aligned with the legislation that will be created in Canada. A number of legal experts told us that all the provinces' laws absolutely must be consistent with the federal legislation. All of these things come into play.

Facial recognition is a fundamental point when it comes to Canadians' quality of life. We have to make sure that people will not be identified by technology that will allow racial profiling, for example. Obviously, we do not want that anywhere. Just two weeks ago, a former Montreal police chief said that there was racial profiling in Montreal. The City of Montreal will probably be charged for that. Things would be even worse if we had tools to facilitate racial profiling.

I see that my time is up. I am happy to answer questions.

● (1700)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite talking about the standing committee. It is an interesting contrast; the current government has always encouraged the passage of bills through second reading so that they can go to committee, which allows for input. I would like to think we are not being criticized for listening to what people say around the table and making amendments accordingly when we feel they give strength to the bill.

It is interesting that we are talking about AI; in one committee, AI was used by the Conservative Party to generate 20,000-plus amendments to one piece of legislation. That highlights the fact that there are those who abuse AI for what I would suggest are mischievous reasons. This is what the Conservatives did in trying to add to a filibuster using AI.

Would the member not agree that most Canadians would see it as somewhat silly to use AI as a mechanism to assist the Conservative research team?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, that is complete disinformation. The 20,000 amendments he is talking about were not written with artificial intelligence, but with my colleagues here who work at the office.

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Again, we are trying to work collaboratively in committee. Now we are being accused of things that are not even true. It is a real shame to see because we have a duty to all Canadians to pass legislation to regulate new technologies of the future. They are not just at our door, they have entered the house. It is important to do this as soon as possible, but they prefer to attack us with nonsense like this.

● (1705)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about Bill C-27. He pointed out that it is not a mammoth bill, but that it should be split in two. That way, we could actually take a comprehensive look at AI and make the necessary amendments, since our country currently has no legislation related to AI.

We are in the most democratic minority government, where everyone can sit around the table to negotiate and discuss. What does my colleague think of the Liberal government's refusal to negotiate and split Bill C-27?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, in fact, we are waiting for the minister. He asked us to tell him what needs to be done. We quickly sent him our response so that we could settle Bill C-27. We are waiting for his reply. Unfortunately, we still have not received it. He travels all over the world. He is a good salesman. However, when it comes to fixing things, it just is not happening.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent presentation on Bill C-27. He mentioned that the government brought forward 55 amendments to its own bill. We just saw a response from the government of some incorrect news regarding amendments Conservatives put forward and how they were put forward.

Could you comment on how ill-prepared the government was when it had to make 55 amendments to its own bill?

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I cannot comment, but the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup can.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, as I explained earlier in my speech, the government introduced Bill C-27 and then it consulted 300 groups. Ideally, it should have consulted those groups before introducing the bill. That would have been the right thing to do. This government is always introducing bills and then proposing a pile of amendments in committee. That is what we call doing things backward, or not doing them right. Unfortunately, that is what has been happening for the past nine years.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the always hon. member for Windsor West.

I will begin by clearing the record right off the bat for the hon. member for Winnipeg North. I was actually proud to participate, as the NDP critic on the committee, in studying and drafting the access to information, privacy and ethics committee's facial recognition technology report called, "Facial Recognition Technology and The Growing Power of Artificial Intelligence".

Today's concurrence motion on our standing committee report, although two years past, remains perhaps even more important today as the technology continues to surpass any legislative regulations and, in my opinion, ethical restrictions. This important and timely work addresses the critical issue of the use of facial recognition technology and its growing power, especially within law enforcement and other sectors of society.

As the ethics critic for the NDP, I believe that it is vitally important to scrutinize this technology through the lens of equity, accountability and human rights. The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics produced this extensive report. Throughout our study, we heard the concerns of 33 witnesses, many of whom were raising alarm bells about the disproportionate harms inflicted on racialized communities and by the unchecked deployment of these technologies.

Let us start with the facts. Facial recognition technology systems are often powered by AI and are hailed for their ability to supposedly streamline processes, verify identities and assist in law enforcement operations. However, the evidence shows that this technology is far from neutral. As we heard from multiple witnesses, including privacy advocates and experts, facial recognition technology is riddled with algorithmic bias, and its misuse can have severe life-altering consequences for people who are already marginalized by society. Witnesses like Cynthia Khoo from the Center on Privacy and Technology at Georgetown Law School, Angelina Wang and Christelle Tessono from Princeton University made it clear that facial recognition technology is 100 times more likely to misidentify Black and Asian individuals. For darker-skinned women, the misidentification rate can exceed one in three.

Now, the system works nearly perfectly for white men, but for racialized individuals, especially Black and indigenous people, it is a flawed and dangerous tool that amplifies the biases already present in our institutions. We have heard time and time again about cases in the United States where Black men were wrongfully arrested due to the errors of facial recognition. Robert Williams, Najeer Parks and Michael Oliver were all victims of a broken system that disproportionately criminalizes Black bodies. Although no such cases have yet to surface in Canada, we cannot ignore the very real possibility of this happening here. We know there is systemic racism within our own police forces, a fact acknowledged by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. So, the use of facial recognition technology, FRT, only serves to exacerbate the problem.

The committee also heard from civil liberties groups, like the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, ICLMG, that the use

of this technology by law enforcement is not just flawed but fundamentally dangerous. We are seeing the potential for mass surveillance without public consent or adequate oversight. Tim McSorley of the ICLMG warned us that this is already happening. The RCMP admitted to using FRT tools like Clearview AI to track individuals without public knowledge or legal safeguards. This is surveillance of our most vulnerable communities under the guise of security, and it is unacceptable.

However, the harm does not stop at law enforcement. We must consider the broader societal implications. Facial recognition technology is not just about identifying criminals, it is also about tracking people in public spaces, at protests or even as they shop. This is a direct threat to fundamental rights, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the right to privacy. Let me be clear, those most affected by this are the very communities that are already subject to overpolicing: Black, indigenous and other racialized people.

Beyond this, we must acknowledge the wider context of how big tech companies, like Google, operate in these grey zones between public-facing ethics and the pursuit of profit through military contracts. Google's involvement in military projects, like Project Nimbus and Project Maven, facilitated through its venture capital firm, Google Ventures, is a stark example of this hidden agenda that is unfolding right now in the genocide in Gaza.

● (1710)

Project Nimbus, a cloud computing contract among Google, Amazon and the Israeli government, facilitates military operations. Critics argue that these operations contribute to surveillance and human rights violations, particularly in occupied Palestinian territories. They test it there, and then they export it around the world. Similarly, Project Maven was a highly controversial initiative in which Google partnered with the U.S. Department of Defense to develop AI technologies that improved drone targeting capabilities, technologies that have a devastating impact on civilian populations.

Routine Proceedings

Although Google publicly distanced itself from Project Maven after internal protests, we know that the company's venture capital firm, Google Ventures, continues to invest in defence and AI companies with military applications. This allows Google to maintain financial stakes in military advancements even as it outwardly claims to step away from these projects. They include activities that are currently under ICJ investigation as war crimes by the Israeli government on the people of Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank. Former staffers who once worked on such military contracts as Maven continue to find themselves in start-ups funded by Google Ventures, ensuring that the ties between big tech and the military remain intact.

The use of drone technology and AI in warfare is expanding. We have seen military droned dogs that are armed and have the ability to track down people, including civilians. Therefore, Google's involvement in these venture capital activities demonstrates that these corporations are still very much engaged in these projects, although through more covert financial channels. While Alphabet may distance its brand from military contracts, it continues to benefit from and shape the future of warfare.

There is a revolving door between tech companies and the military-industrial complex, which is facilitated by investments from companies such as Google. This underscores the ethical concerns that we must address as a Parliament. The government's role in regulating these technologies is crucial. There are 18 recommendations that came out two years ago, and I challenge the hon. members from the Liberals side to stand up and actually talk about what meaningful action has happened over those two years.

This is crucial to protecting privacy and civil liberties. Not only that, but it is about preventing big tech from operating unchecked in areas that have profound implications for human rights. The report does not just outline the harms; it also provides a path forward, with several key recommendations that are necessary to mitigate these risks. I asked the hon. member for Winnipeg North to please refer to the recommendations and come ready to talk about them in a meaningful way.

To be clear, the committee has called for immediate action, including a federal moratorium on the use of facial recognition technologies by police and Canadian industries unless they consult with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and obtain judicial authorization. I would extend this even further to say that these moratoriums ought to include any type of technology, be it deemed primarily lethal or part of a lethal technology that could be used in conjunction with the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the West Bank. Such technology needs to be subject to an immediate arms embargo.

Furthermore, we need stringent measures for transparency and accountability. An AI registry must be established in which all algorithmic tools and any entity operating in Canada are listed. Civil society must be actively involved in these discussions, particularly those representing marginalized groups. Witnesses such as Dr. Brenda McPhail from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association warned that, even if the technology were flawless and 100% accurate for every person, it would still pose a danger. This is because it would be perfect for the discriminatory gaze of law enforcement,

making it easier to target racialized communities that already face systemic discrimination.

I will save the rest of my content for any interested or curious questions that might come my way.

● (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated to all committee members who participated in the coming up of the report, I can appreciate that there are many different reports that are formulated in our standing committees. I recognize the efforts of those who came before to present and those committee members who have actually come up with the final reports themselves. I am sure the member would be aware that there was a ministerial response to the report. Has he had the chance to read through it? If so, could he indicate which recommendation he feels that the minister did not address? I think there are 19 in total.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, the Canadian Human Rights Act must ensure it addresses discrimination caused by AI technology, and the Privacy Commissioner needs to have the power to meaningfully impose penalties on those who violate the law.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member's perspective given that he was a member of the ethics committee when this report was drafted. He did draft the report and, obviously, read it.

One of the issues that has come up consistently over the last nine years with the government, and we have heard directly from the Privacy Commissioner on this on several occasions, is that oftentimes the Privacy Commissioner is considered an afterthought. They are not even consulted on any of the legislation. The office and the commissioner are not consulted in such a way that they could proactively provide advice to the government in order to avoid many of the pitfalls the hon. member spoke about.

I am wondering if the member could speak about the importance of the involvement of the Privacy Commission. As the member just said, the Privacy Commissioner also has asked for the ability to levy fines if the government is not following the privacy laws of this country.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, the truth is, many of our arm's-length commissioners do not have the resources, the teeth or the legislative ability to really dig in to hold government accountable. Yes, they might have mandates, but what we found at committee, if the hon. member will recall, is that the RCMP often refused to answer our questions fully and truthfully. It did not have what is called "a duty of candour" in terms of being able to answer questions and be held accountable. We often found at committee that the RCMP would send members of the law enforcement chain of command who did not have adequate answers.

Routine Proceedings

If they were doing that to us, as parliamentarians, I can only imagine how frustrating the process is for privacy commissioners, as an afterthought. I cannot recall exactly what the number was, but we only scratched the surface on how this is being used ubiquitously across government. What we came to find out was that the vast majority of departments never once considered a privacy impact assessment, even though that was required by their departmental mandates.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I found my colleague's speech very interesting.

When it comes to new technology, whether it be AI or facial recognition, it is very troubling to see what states like China, Iran and Russia are doing. They can use these technologies against people in their country or around the world who are protesting.

I recently read a book by Portuguese author José Rodriguez dos Santos, a former journalist. He wrote a novel about how China is using AI against Uyghur communities. It was rather terrifying.

I would like my colleague to talk a bit about how Canada is always lagging behind when it comes to new technologies. Right now, in Quebec, many people are looking into the impact that screens are having on young people. Screens are here. They are already part of our lives. It is a bit too late now. It is the same thing with AI. AI is already here. Some states are already using it. Here in Parliament, we are presenting reports and talking about the effects of these new technologies.

What does my colleague think that we could do to make sure that we are not always lagging behind when it comes to new technologies?

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, the NDP stands for genuine accountability and the protection of civil liberties. We do not have to look abroad. Although there are many good and legitimate cases abroad of this technology being abused, it is being abused right here in Canada. It is being abused by corporations left unchecked and a government that simply refuses to act.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to follow my colleague and I thank him for his really good work with regard to this report, which was issued in October 2022.

It is sad that we have not seen the government use this report for what it should have been used for. It is a call for action to deal with many of the issues of artificial intelligence, and it puts due light and justice not only to areas of concern but also to some of the good that AI can do, as my colleague referenced, when it is applied to conditions that have oversight and due diligence related to knowledge and awareness. It also looks at the vulnerabilities of AI as it is being built out.

I have had the opportunity to attend several conferences across the United States and Canada on artificial intelligence, and I can say that we are missing the opportunity to act in a responsible fashion. My colleague mentioned some practical examples, and I will return to those in a few minutes. I want to start by identifying that

at the industry committee, Bill C-27, to deal with artificial intelligence, has been languishing since the start of this Parliament. That bill was tabled by the government and not a single thing took place with respect to it for a full year. We had a series of hearings and discussions with testimony that lasted weeks upon weeks to get to the bill, and at that time, we identified several problems.

There are two key components the New Democrats have been pushing for with regard to this bill that are important right now. The issues over privacy, which there seems to be a path forward to resolve, were part of the bill. Then the government decided to put artificial intelligence in the bill as well, which complicated the bill's sense. The government tried to sneak one past everybody by combining these pieces of legislation, which was not necessary. In fact, it was the member for New Westminster—Burnaby who got the bill separated for votes in this chamber, which we can still have, but the bill should never have been put together like this. The protection of Canadians' privacy should have been, foremost, the part of the bill we did first, before even going to testimony on artificial intelligence, instead of trying to sneak one by the Canadian public.

My colleague from Hamilton has outlined some of the deficiencies of artificial intelligence related to facial recognition, which this report speaks to. However, artificial intelligence, given some of the models that have been developed to date that people use, also already shows biases with regard to race, religion and the inputs it has. I have heard from the Amazons and the Googles at different conferences, and they admit to their failures in creating algorithms. They have biases for race and different genders built and baked into their systems because the people generating AI are not diverse and do not have to deal with the consequences of people being identified and misidentified mostly based on not being white and male. That is a known fact in the entire universe of AI.

In fact, at the time the government tabled the bill, a number of AI scientists broke from the major conglomerates to warn humanity about that. However, we have seen what has taken place from how badly the bill was manufactured, as we have over 200 amendments on this bill alone. As referenced here in the chamber by one of my colleagues on the committee, over 50 amendments were from the government, which tells us how badly it was crafted.

Those are very important factors to identify, because we are passing on protecting Canadian privacy and on updating the Privacy Commissioner. That is identified through several excellent recommendations in this report, which call for action. Despite that, not only have the Liberals done nothing, but on top of that, they filibustered their own bill. Even in the past week, when the minister was in Montreal, the Liberals blamed the committee and the opposition for holding up the bill. His own members filibustered their own bill before we broke at the end of the last session. That is what took place in committee and they blamed us publicly.

I asked the minister at committee just last week whether he regretted his comments or at least wanted to clarify them, but he doubled down. We have been requesting amendments to deal with the Privacy Commissioner and to protect Canadians, which they know of, but the Liberals are hanging onto the idea that we want to be complicit in an AI strategy that is not fundamentally vetted and has the not-for-profit community, the public and the academic community all concerned.

• (1725)

The Googles, the Amazons and all the others that are going to benefit from this are not concerned, and that is why they are clinging on to keeping the bill together. What I want to talk about, in terms of how we can move forward, the NDP's proposition to deal with the one carrying point that has a problem. This has united the other members on the committee, the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP, who are concerned about a tribunal system set up regarding the Privacy Commissioner.

We have concerns about that because the Competition Bureau has a tribunal over top of it. As New Democrats called for stopping the takeover of Shaw by Rogers, the government allowed the Competition Bureau to be sued for \$5 million for doing its job by Rogers itself. The New Democrats defended the Canadian public. They defended the position that should have been there, which was not to let this takeover take place. On top of that, the public was punished by not even having their representation be able to carry the case without repercussions that were allowed from Rogers and Telus.

To wrap up quickly, the real repercussions are as follows: We have seen the Lavender project used by the Israel Defense Forces, using artificial intelligence, as a practical situation that has cost human lives. Today, this has consequences for thousands of families in Gaza. It is a real situation that has come to take place since this report was published. It is a real situation in which artificial intelligence in the military needs oversight and control.

I agree with my colleague and the rest of the committee in their call for halting artificial intelligence face recognition right now until we get some controls. It is about time the Liberals actually came to the table with solutions instead of putting up problems and other problems in the future.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 from October 8 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is difficult to keep track of all the scandals, the cover-ups and the government's defiance in the House. The narratives, the consistent and flagrant—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have a point of order from the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I did not want to interrupt the member, but we return to Routine Proceedings, which means the presentation of petitions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We return to the debate on privilege. Routine Proceedings will be tomorrow morning.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, the member must be new here.

I was saying we cannot keep track of all of the scandals. We are here again, day after day, asking for accountability. "It is hard not to feel disappointed in one's government when every day there is a new scandal". Do members know who said that? Those were the words of the Prime Minister more than 10 years ago, back when he was somebody who at least pretended to care about honesty and transparency.

That was then and this is now. We are nine years into the Liberal-NDP government and it has proven that absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is another day and another scandal, just another reason we are here. Indeed, we are deeply disappointed in the government.

We have \$400 million of taxpayer money in question. That is more than in the sponsorship scandal, another scandal the Liberals are well known for in Canadian history. We have over 186 conflicts of interest, as determined by the Auditor General, and more Liberal arrogance and sanctimony that seem to suggest "rules for me, and not for thee".

Privilege

We have already been here for a week trying to make the government turn over the documents, at least to the police, and comply with an order from the Speaker. The Speaker ruled that what the government is up to, or whoever's advice it is taking, is against the rules and it should produce these documents for the House. However, the government refuses to listen, ignoring the order right here in the House, an order of Parliament, and a decision of the Speaker, in a blatant effort to obstruct the truth and hide the paper trail.

That is why we are here, day after day. If the Liberals are trying this hard, there must be something really bad in those documents, and we are going to find out somehow. We are going to be here for as long as it takes for the people of this country to get accountability for the corruption, and for the Liberals to turn those documents over to police, so this place can get back to doing the work of Parliament.

The Liberal government wants to send this motion to committee, where it will die an ungraceful death out of the view of Canadians, and Conservatives will not let that happen. We know that when somebody takes something from us, we do not call the committee; we call the police. That is exactly what we are asking the government to do. That is exactly what the order of the House asks it to do.

There is a way to bury this out of sight and out of mind, and out of accountability, to skirt the consequences of whatever the Liberals are hiding. Like I said, we will be here for as long as it takes for Canadians to get the accountability they deserve. We know the Liberal corruption will just continue if we do not do something about it.

The Liberals have proven time and time again that they will put their interests, and the interests of their wealthy, well-connected friends, above everything else, even at a time when Canadians are skipping meals and just trying to get by.

The international trade minister proved that when she spent tens of thousands of dollars on media training provided by a close friend and then claimed not to know she could not do that.

The international development minister proved that when he paid nearly \$100,000 to a sister of one of his staffers for media training. He did not even try to cover it up. He gave the money to a food marketing company for "political PR". Judging by his performance, it certainly was not worth the cost.

The former finance minister Bill Morneau proved it again and again, like when he somehow forgot he owned a luxury villa in France, or when he sold off the shares to a company that he directly influenced as finance minister.

Let us not forget about the Prime Minister, who breached conflict of interest rules while in office. He used his position to get VIP treatment from foreign officials in violation of ethics laws. He did it again during the WE Charity scandal, funnelling nearly a billion dollars into an organization that employed members of his family and members of the finance minister's family.

Who could forget SNC-Lavalin, where the government spent months inappropriately pressuring the Attorney General to give preferential treatment to a big, powerful Liberal-supporting compa-

ny, despite a paper trail of corrupt actions from here all the way to the Great White North? There was also the former Liberal MP who got over \$200 million on a sole-source contract to provide equipment that was never used. I know it is difficult to keep up with the scandals. I find it difficult too and I work here.

• (1735)

Then, of course, there is the arrive scam scandal. The Liberals paid \$54 million for an app that could have been built in a weekend for \$250,000, an app that did not work and inadvertently sent tens of thousands of people into quarantine. They covered up that scandal, just like they are covering up whatever they are covering up today.

It is a shame that we see all this grift and corruption happening in Ottawa. These are just a few examples. I think about what my family and parents would say about this.

My parents came to this country with nothing. As many members of this chamber know, they were refugees from a Communist eastern European country. My dad drove a taxi and worked in a small business so that my mom, my brother and I could go to school. My parents paid their taxes. They did what they were asked to do by society. They scrimped, saved and worked harder than anybody I have ever known just to give us a better life.

It is those tax dollars that the government is using to ship to Liberal insiders. It is the tax dollars of single mothers who have to work overtime just to have a little bit extra every month so they can pay for food or fill up another tank of gas in their car. It is the tax dollars of seniors who have to make a choice between eating, heating their home or paying for medicine because the cost of living in Canada has become just too high for them. It is the tax dollars of those who recently came to this country with a vision painted for them by the government, only to find that things here are far from what they expected and were promised.

A million people in my province alone used a food bank in the last month. The best that the government could do for them was to take their money and use it for people whose only qualification for it was to have a Liberal membership card. It gave almost \$400 million to a board it appointed so its members could give that money to their own companies. That is what we are discussing here today. Then the government goes back to those middle-class families, because it is the middle-class families who are using food banks, to tell them that their taxes are too low and that they should pay even more in taxes so that it can do more of this.

Privilege

We can debate for days in Parliament to get the government to turn over the evidence of its wrongdoing to the police. It does not even have the basic respect to tell Canadians what is going on with their tax dollars. If it did, we would not be here for the seventh day in a row. It is covering up the evidence again. That is exactly why we are here, and we are going to be here until it produces those documents, as the Speaker said it should.

Speaking of Liberal membership cards, I think we should talk about corruption in the government. I do not know that we can do that without bringing up Mark Carney, carbon tax Carney, as we like to call him, and I think many other Canadians are now calling him.

Just a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister gave carbon tax Carney a plum job of being the new phantom finance minister, giving him a job that he so desperately wanted. He is getting all the perks of being a finance minister. He will get to set economic policy and give the Prime Minister advice. However, he has none of the burdens, such as the pesky ethics and conflict of interest rules that every other member would have to go through if they still worked in the private sector like he does.

That means Mark Carney gets to continue to sit on boards of massive corporations, such as Brookfield, where he can continue the time-worn Liberal tradition of enriching insiders with Canadian tax dollars, the exact same thing the Liberals refuse to produce documents for in the House today. It took him just days to get there. Already, Brookfield is asking Ottawa for another \$10-billion new fund. That is a fund that Brookfield would pocket with management fees. We have no idea how much he is going to get paid for that. We have no idea what that looks like and what the returns will be. These are just a few of the jobs. The chair of Brookfield is one of them. The Prime Minister's phantom finance minister is another.

On top of that, Mark Carney has another job. He is going to be the guy who will be in charge of raising dough for the Liberals in the next election campaign, and he is already sliding into people's inboxes asking for money if they are on the Liberal donor list, unless they end up in their spam folder, which it seems most Canadians have by now.

• (1740)

At some point, the breaking of the conflict of interest rules here become so obvious. It is also obvious that there is disappointment in so many other things that the government does. It would start to become comical if it were not such a serious issue. Maybe Mark Carney can call the other Randy and give him some pointers on conflict of interest. This is what I am talking about. We cannot even keep track.

That brings us to where we are today with Sustainable Development Technology Canada. That is the organization we are discussing today. Essentially, it is a billion-dollar slush fund, with Canadian tax money spent at will. It was supposed to give money to companies developing new technology that would grow our economy, help reduce our carbon footprint and all of that, but what actually happened? That is what we do not know. Nearly \$400 million was misspent. Ten businesses did not fit eligibility requirements, but they got \$60 million. Board members had the rules right

in front of them, but they chose not to follow them or were simply unable to.

We have a minister who disregarded all of that, who simply did not pay attention. His job is to pay attention. We know that 82% of contracts analyzed by the Auditor General had conflicts of interest. If there was a school of corruption, these guys would be honour students. The Auditor General raised the red flags. Members from many parties in this House raised red flags too, even the New Democrats, who are practically still best friends with the Liberals. They ripped up the agreement a couple weeks ago but taped it back together, and now we are in a weird time where they sort of yell at them a bit. However, the Liberals refused to respect the order of this House, an order that reigns supreme in this country, an order from the Speaker.

We have been here before. We already knew that Liberals disrespect laws and all kinds of ethics norms for how ministers and the Prime Minister should behave. He broke the law. That is just one more example of how the Liberals disrespect Parliament. We saw it when they tried to use the COVID crisis as an excuse to give themselves unprecedented spending powers, probably to funnel more money into Liberal pockets. We are still unravelling some of that.

That is exactly what happened just months later. The Liberals got caught red-handed in the WE Charity scandal, and rather than face Parliament, they decided to prorogue Parliament in a clear effort to avoid accountability. Some say that maybe there is an expectation they will do that again.

Then there was the Winnipeg lab case, where again and again they were held in contempt of Parliament for refusing to produce documents and stonewalling the investigations of this House. That is just another case of incompetence and corruption, and exactly what we are going to keep talking about on behalf of all Canadians who want accountability and answers from them.

It is clear that there is only one avenue left. The government clearly does not care about the Ethics Commissioner or the Auditor General because it disregards them so often. There used to be something called ministerial accountability in this place. When ministers are involved in scandals, they get promotions, kept in cabinet or shuffled to a different role where maybe they are out of the spotlight for a bit, but nobody ever faces consequences. It is obvious that this extends to the Liberals' disrespect for Parliament too.

Privilege

It is time to call in the big guns, the RCMP. The Liberals should turn over the documents to the RCMP. If this happened in any business, the business would not have to go to some committee. It would turn everything it had over to the cops, especially if it was telling Canadians that it had nothing to hide and if it was boasting, like the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, who boasts every day in this House that he has had four investigations on this.

However, the Liberals are refusing to provide documents, and their arguments change as the days go on. First it was some weird argument about a charter violation, which is questionable because some ministries turned over documents. It is only charter violations if the government does not want us to see documents that have something really bad in them. I am going to say this very slowly so that people at home understand it: The charter is there to protect people from the government; it is not there to protect the Liberals from giving almost \$400 million to their friends.

● (1745)

Their story changed again. I think that the latest refrain is that Parliament does not have to demand the documents because the cops do not want all the documents. If we have nothing to hide, then turn over the documents. I am sure there is something to hide, because otherwise we would not be in the seventh day of speaking at length to this very motion about an obstruction and a defiance of a Speaker's ruling.

The Liberals should be able to turn the documents over to the police so Canadians can get the accountability they deserve and so we can get this place back to work for all the people who cannot afford to eat, for the two million people who use a food bank across the country over the course of a month, and for those who cannot afford a home because the price of a home has doubled over the last nine years.

The price of rent has doubled. The price of a mortgage payment has more than doubled, with inflation and interest rates rampant and out of control over the last number of years, putting Canadians further and further behind. There is crime, chaos, drugs and disorder in our streets. What is happening in this country, with the burning of a Canadian flag in one of our largest cities, in front of an art gallery, where people shout in the streets now, "death to Canada"?

Those are the things, the work, Parliament should be getting back to. Some ministers do not have the courage to get up and condemn them, and there is an awful lot of silence from everybody in the backbenches on issues like that. Instead they get up and make argument after argument. Some make less sense than the last ones they put forward, and their story changes every single day.

Conservatives will be here for as long as it takes for Canadians to get the accountability, for the Liberals to turn over the documents to the police so they know who got rich and which Liberal insiders with Liberal memberships got rich with \$400 million of tax money. That is what we are here to do. I assure Canadians that when they get the answers to those questions, they are not going to like them.

The Auditor General has only so much power. It is Parliament that is supreme and can order the documents, because we, the people here in the chamber seats, are elected by the people who want accountability from the government. If the government believed in

the institutions that it purports to protect, it would trust the RCMP to redact whatever it needed to redact to keep the privacy of those who made no trouble at all, and to make sure that those who need to be accountable to the people actually face justice for potential criminality.

That is why we are here today. That is why we are going to continue to be here on behalf of Canadians: to get accountability. The Liberals should turn over the documents to the police so we can get back to work.

● (1750)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here because Navdeep Bains appointed someone who had been an adviser to Stephen Harper, to Brian Mulroney and to Jim Flaherty, all Conservatives, if the member is not aware, to a position which is arm's-length. A short time thereafter, issues were raised, and when they became known to the minister, the board was replaced, there was a freeze on new funding, and there were two independent internal reviews.

The Auditor General has been looking at this, and there is the issue in regard to the RCMP's looking into the matter. The reason we are actually here right now is that we did provide information to the committee. Yes, it was redacted, just like Stephen Harper redacted information on numerous occasions. The Conservatives say that this is not good enough and that they want the information, but not for members of Parliament. They want to get the information and give it directly to the RCMP. The Auditor General and the RCMP have disagreed with the tactic that the Conservative Party is raising today.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the only person who is stonewalling Parliament is the Prime Minister in his refusal to hand over these documents. Let me correct some of the misinformation we continue to hear from this member over the course of this debate. First of all, SDTC received a clean bill of health in 2017, and it was only after hand-picked Liberal board members ended up on the board that we are even having this conversation. SDTC is not arm's-length. The minister recommends board appointments. The Liberals recommend other Liberals, who funnel money into their Liberal companies. That is what we want to get to the bottom of, and I am not sure why the stonewalling. The member can go to the Prime Minister and say, "Let's just give those documents to Parliament, like the Speaker asked us to."

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her fine speech.

My question is simple. I do not understand why the government does not simply produce the documents. Why is it dragging its feet like this? The order from members was clear. The government needs to comply with that order, but it is not doing so. It seems as though the government is not really bothered by the fact that it has lost control of the legislative agenda of the House.

What does my colleague think is the reason for that?

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, there must be something really bad in those documents if the Liberals are refusing to turn them over to the House, as per an order from the House. We have seen this story play out before. I mentioned it throughout my remarks. The stonewalling of this party's members to withhold information from Canadians only suggests there is wrongdoing. If they had nothing to hide, then they would hand over those documents.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the hon. member for Thornhill for such a precise and detailed speech about an important issue. There are so many scandals that people have stopped counting, and it is still going on day after day. There is never a week without a new scandal coming up, and the size of the scandals is getting bigger and bigger. We are now talking about \$400 million. My fear is that corruption under the government's watch is becoming a culture in Canada. Will the hon. member tell us what it means for corruption to become a culture and how much of a threat it is to our democratic system and to the way we do business in the government?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with my hon. colleague. I do not think corruption is a culture in Canada. I think corruption is a culture in the Liberal Party. Soon Canadians will have the opportunity to go to a carbon tax election and send each and every one packing, to axe the tax, to build the homes, to fix the budget and to stop the crime.

• (1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, notice the member continues to stick to a script that is misleading Canadians. The RCMP and the Auditor General of Canada have made it very clear what the Conservatives are asking the Government of Canada to do, through the legislature, is get information unredacted and sent directly to the RCMP. Both of those independent institutions have made it very clear we should not be doing what the Conservative Party is suggesting. Canadians have rights, and Conservatives might not care about those rights, but we in the Liberal benches do.

Why does the Conservative Party continue to ignore the advice of the RCMP and Canada's Auditor General?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, Canadians do have rights, and they have the right to get accountability for the money the government spent, their money. This place reigns supreme. On the documents that the government should give to the police, if it had nothing to hide then it would not be afraid of doing that. To say that this is a violation of charter rights is insane. It is not there to protect the government, it is there to protect Canadians.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague said that corruption is not a feature of this place generally but of the Liberal Party. I was in the house when the Harper government, the Conservative government, was found in

Privilege

contempt twice for exactly the type of issue that is before the House being debated, which is refusing to produce documents it had been ordered to produce by the House. It concerned Afghan detainees and it also related to the price of crime bills.

Can the member tell me, was it corruption in the Conservative Party that led to the finding of contempt in this Parliament when the Conservatives refused to hand over documents, or is that just ancient history that does not have anything to do with today?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I was not in the House at the time, but I was in the lobby at the very time when the NDP used to be an opposition party in this country. I remember that really clearly. It was before they married the Liberals and joined their culture of corruption.

If they are not going to stand up against corruption, then we are finally going to elect a government in this country that gets accountability for people and stands against the culture of corruption in the Liberal Party.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a pleasure to bring your sister-in-law's voice to the chamber, along with the voices of all the other constituents from Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

The Speaker has made a ruling that House business must be suspended until the government hands over all documents related to the SDTC scandal to the RCMP. The Auditor General of Canada found that the Prime Minister had turned Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal insiders, with \$400 million paid out to them. There was a total of 186 cases of conflict of interest, an astounding number.

I will be asking this more than once: Where is the accountability? The Auditor General made it clear that the blame for this scandal falls on the industry minister, who “did not sufficiently monitor” the contracts given to Liberal insiders.

A July article in the National Post reads: “The former chairperson of a scandal-plagued clean tech fund...was found to have ‘improperly furthered’ the interests of companies she was associated with by failing to recuse herself from the board’s funding decisions, according to the ethics commissioner’s latest report.”

It goes on:

...Annette Verschuren resigned as the president of the board of directors of Sustainable Development Technology Canada...late last year when it was announced that she was the subject of an ethics investigation.... [E]thics commissioner Konrad van Finckenstein found that Verschuren “failed to comply” with some provisions of the Conflict of Interest Act....

She resigned, but the industry minister did not follow suit; he announced that he would not resign. Why was it appropriate for Ms. Verschuren to resign but inappropriate for the minister to do the same?

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The previous speaker, my colleague, referenced ministerial accountability. Where is it? This brings back some memories of the sponsorship scandal. Members may recall that the year was 1996 when the Liberals founded the sponsorship program to promote federalism in Quebec. Two Auditor General reports found that the Liberals, under Jean Chrétien, had overseen the spending of \$250 million through the sponsorship program between 1997 and 2001. Of those funds, \$100 million was redirected to the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party. The scandal led Canadians to vote out the Liberals for the next decade, in favour of Conservatives, who could be trusted with the public purse strings.

Now history is repeating itself. As the early twentieth-century writer and philosopher George Santayana wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” It seems that the government has forgotten the past.

Let us fast-forward to today. Here we are once again. Apparently the Liberals feel that they are “entitled to [their] entitlements”, a phrase infamously coined by former cabinet minister David Dingwall. The scandals are numerous and mounting. What I am incredulous about is that, over the past nine years, there has been no accountability from the top. Again, I reference ministerial, or even higher, accountability.

The Prime Minister has thrown those who did not succumb to his will under the bus. Let us think of the Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould and the Hon. Dr. Jane Philpott. However, he himself has not taken any responsibility for what is arguably the most scandal-plagued and corrupt government in recent Canadian political history. I have a laundry list of Liberal scandals to validate my point. I only have 20 minutes, but I am going to take a crack at touching upon just a few of the conflicts of interest and corruption cases here.

Again, I am going to ask this: Where is the accountability? In 2020, a firm in the riding of the then minister of public services and procurement was paid \$150 million for COVID-19 vaccines that were never delivered. Medicago was that firm, and it received \$173 million in research money, for a total of \$323 million in federal aid. Medicago was to build a vaccine factory, but that never transpired. Once again, the Liberals shut down any investigation into why taxpayers paid such an amount and received nothing in return. Unfortunately, this is an all-too-common pattern for the government.

• (1800)

Bill Morneau is another former minister who was scandal-prone. He began his political career by violating the Elections Act, for which he was fined. He participated in a series of “department-supported events” in his official capacity as finance minister during the pre-election period for the 2019 election. This “caused the expenses related to those events to benefit the [Liberal Party of Canada]”. This is the same minister who forgot to declare that he had a villa in France. I am to address all questions through the Speaker, so Mr. Speaker, have you ever forgotten a house?

Mr. Morneau also sponsored Bill C-27, which just happened to increase the value of pensions sold by the minister's company Morneau Shepell. When the bill was tabled in the House of Commons, the value of Morneau Shepell shares jumped. Coincidentally, the Minister Morneau held 21 million dollars' worth of those

shares. Conflict of interest, anyone? Again, I reiterate, where is the accountability?

CBC reported that when former minister David Lametti left cabinet, many people were wondering why. We have since learned that the former attorney general cancelled a verdict of first-degree murder against Jacques Delisle, a former judge, even though all legal experts were against this decision. Mr. Lametti and the government refused to answer why he had done that, even though Delisle later pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

I am not done yet. In fact, I am just getting started.

The disregard and breaches of ethics kept on coming. In December 2022, the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development of Canada was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner of giving contracts to her best friend.

Who can forget, of course, the case of the other Randy? Last July, the ethics committee uncovered text messages showing that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages continued to direct his company while he was minister. In another sheer coincidence, his company received nearly \$120 million in government grants and contracts. Again, conflict of interest, anyone? Where is the accountability? The minister testified that the Randy referenced in these texts was not him, but another Randy who just happened to work at the company that he had a 50% ownership stake in. At the following committee hearing, his business partner testified that, really, only one Randy ever worked at this company and that was the minister.

Friends and family of Liberal cabinet ministers have also inappropriately benefited from their ethical lapses. The Minister of Transport failed to report, as required under the Conflict of Interest Act, that her husband John Knowlton, a director at LifeLabs, was among several businesses awarded COVID-testing contracts, as confirmed by the health minister. Blacklock's reported that LifeLabs received COVID-testing contracts worth \$66,307,424 on June 23 and a separate \$1.9-million contract on August 20 when the transport minister was the minister of public works. It is another case of “nothing to see here, folks”. Conflict of interest, anyone? Where is the accountability?

Who can forget Scott Brison when he was President of the Treasury Board? He was trying to block the approval for a navy supply ship that was being built at Davie shipyard in favour of the powerful Irving shipyard. He used to chair one of the investment firms as his spouse sat on the board of directors. He then worked with the government to have Vice-Admiral Norman charged with a breach of trust before Vice-Admiral Norman was exonerated of all charges in 2019. Is there no limit to the lengths to which government members will go to to enrich the lives of themselves and of their friends?

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I would be negligent if I failed to mention Navdeep Bains, whose name has come up in earlier interventions. He is another former Liberal cabinet minister. As minister of innovation, science and industry, he pledged that the government would demand that the big three, Bell Canada, Rogers Communications Canada and Telus Communications, would lower their prices by 25% in the next two years for cellphone plans that offer between two and six gigabytes of data. In April 2023, former minister Bains was appointed by Rogers to its executive leadership team. The hiring of Mr. Bains does raise concerns, especially in the light of the government's approval of the Rogers-Shaw merger. Did anyone on the government side of the House dare to question the blatant conflict of interest here? Where is the accountability?

● (1805)

Of course, no Liberal scandal chronicle would be complete without mentioning the SNC-Lavalin affair and the WE Charity scandal. I have previously mentioned how former ministers Wilson-Raybould and Philpott were victims of the government's corrupt behaviour. SNC-Lavalin was more than just breaching ethics rules.

The Prime Minister made a travesty of the separation of the power between his office and that of the Attorney General's office. The PM ignored the independence of the Attorney General to help his friends at SNC avoid criminal prosecution. In doing so, he orchestrated a campaign to pressure the Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould, to overrule the independent public prosecution. No one should be above the law, not even the Prime Minister.

Another infamous scandal was, of course, the WE Charity. This time, it was the Prime Minister's family who benefited greatly. Margaret Trudeau was paid approximately \$250,000 for speaking at 28 events, while the Prime Minister's brother Alexandre spoke at eight events and received about \$32,000. In testimony before MPs on July 28, Marc Kielburger said Sophie Grégoire Trudeau was reimbursed more than \$200,000 in expenses for appearances at WE Charity events, and the WE Charity covered \$41,000 in costs for Bill Morneau and his family in 2017 for trips to Ecuador and Kenya to review the organization's humanitarian work.

I would be remiss if I did not touch upon the notorious arrive scam and GC Strategies, the Liberal-friendly company that charged at least \$60 million for the app, which was to have cost \$80,000. To add insult to injury, 76% of the contractors did zero work on the app. Once again, the Canadian taxpayer footed the bill with zero accountability on behalf of the government.

I am still not done. Unbelievably, there are more illicit Liberal practices to come.

Let us talk about the Prime Minister's Christmas vacation at the Aga Khan's island and the subsequent \$50 million in federal funding the Aga Khan Foundation has received since 2016 from the government. The vacation lasted until January 4, 2017, eight days in total. It was later disclosed that the government expenditures for the trip had amounted to \$215,000. The Prime Minister then adopted the position that he and the Aga Khan were close friends, and the trip was of a more personal nature, even though they had not seen each other in 30 years.

It is more of the “entitled to my entitlements” philosophy, I guess.

The Prime Minister has a penchant for luxurious vacations. Most Canadians would agree he is justified in taking a vacation; I certainly do. However, I do not believe they would agree he should satisfy his champagne tastes on the taxpayers' dime. Although it took some persistent digging through access to information, the PMO finally admitted it was the Prime Minister and his wife who stayed in a \$6,000-per-night hotel suite while attending the funeral for our sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.

The stay at the Corinthia London hotel became just another shameful display of a lack of respect for average Canadians by billing them an astounding \$400,000. The Prime Minister and his office were not forthcoming with these details. Witness what we are doing here today and for the past week. Again, it is an abhorrent lack of accountability.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the disastrous trip to India by Canada's first family. As *The Economic Times* reported at the time, “Trudeau's time in India was criticised for its lack of official business, not to mention—”

● (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that I am sure you can anticipate. The member knows full well we are not supposed to be using members' names.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member can retract and restart that.

The hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington has the floor.

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I do so retract.

As *The Economic Times* reported at the time, “[So-and-so's] time in India was criticised for its lack of official business, not to mention the excessive photo-ops and insensitive overuse of Indian clothing.” Canadians were once again on the hook for what appeared to be more of a lavish family vacation than a diplomatic bilateral meeting. The fiasco included having his own celebrity chef flown in from Vancouver.

However, all of this pales in comparison to the Prime Minister inviting convicted terrorist Jaspal Atwal to dinner. Mr. Atwal was convicted of attempted murder in Canada in 1987 after he tried to assassinate a visiting Punjabi cabinet minister. It turned out that Atwal was a long-time Liberal supporter and activist, a former donor to the party and a former Liberal board member for the electoral district of Surrey, British Columbia.

Privilege

There has not been accountability for the India fiasco, and Canada was left red-faced with embarrassment and \$1.66 million in debt. There are simply too many Liberal breaches of ethics violations to name them all here today. I have not touched upon the Julie Payette fiasco, nor the Minister of National Defence's interference in the Nova Scotia shooting tragedy. Members will recall that he pressured the then-police commissioner Brenda Lucki to publicly release information about specific firearms used in the shooting to advance the federal government's gun control legislation.

Following the resignation of the former ethics commissioner, Mario Dion, who I believe resigned due to overwork, the Liberal government decided to appoint Martine Richard, the sister-in-law of the current public safety minister, to replace him. Again, is that not a conflict of interest to anyone? Where is the accountability?

This is why common-sense Conservatives have raised this question of privilege. This is why we are here today, why we were here yesterday and the day before, and why we will be here tomorrow and in the coming weeks, if necessary. This is why we call on the government, SDTC and the Auditor General to hand over all documents, unredacted, related to the Prime Minister's green slush fund to the RCMP.

The argument has been made that handing over these documents breaches the constitutional rights of individuals. It is time. The government recognizes that the Constitution was designed to protect individuals from the government, not the government from individuals. It is time for the government to come clean with Canadians. We have had enough with the cover-ups and enough with them gorging themselves, their families and their friends at the public trough.

The Liberals need to hand over the documents. We want to get back to the work of the people in this chamber. It is not Conservatives obstructing this work. All it would take would be for the Prime Minister to hand over the documents. We want accountability.

• (1815)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to my colleague across the way, the first thing that comes across my mind during the character assassination of a number of individuals is that there is a very long list of Conservatives as well. If I had a bit of time, my list could be longer than the member's list.

An example of that would be Stephen Harper going to India. Maybe he figured they did not have cars in India. He actually put a car on a plane so he would have a car in India. What was the cost? It was \$1 million for a car. Is that a scandal? What about the anti-terrorism scandal, the Phoenix scandal, the G8 spending scandal, the ETS scandal, the F-35 scandal, the Senate scandal, and the multitude of election scandals? All of them were Conservatives.

My question is related to the question the New Democratic member posed about the member's colleague. Stephen Harper did the very same thing in not wanting to provide documents that were not redacted. Our argument is a whole lot stronger than what Stephen

Harper's was, yet the Conservatives will not even say that was a problem. We know it was, in fact, a scandal.

Would the member not agree that the Conservatives, including his leader, who was a good friend of Stephen Harper's and a member of his cabinet, were wrong in denying access to that information, or does that principle not apply when they are in government?

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I was not complete and I acknowledge that. I forgot Frank Baylis and the respirators. My colleague mentioned carbon tax Carney. I also did not mention carbon tax Carney.

I must give my hon. colleague credit. For a week, he has been responding with the same arguments that have been disproven over and over again. He mentioned former prime minister Stephen Harper and the Senate scandal, the biggest scandal, where the Conservatives got caught trying to pay back \$60,000, money that ended up being appropriate, although the optics were terrible, which is why they did what they did, which was to pay back to the public treasury \$60,000. The taxpayers were paid back.

The rules were changed, actually, to be far more proper, but in the end it was found that it was legally taken. The optics were bad. I acknowledge that. That is the biggest scandal from the previous government. That was a small one. We were getting caught paying money back to the taxpayer. I did not take the time in my 20 minutes to add up the millions upon millions upon millions of dollars that I articulated, let alone the scandals that I did not have time to get to.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member might want to Google search "ETS scandal". That was \$400 million.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe the day is getting long. We are talking about who has the bigger scandal. Maybe we should all re-think this. I also want to bring to everyone's attention that we are taking a lot of time asking questions and we are taking a lot of time answering them. I know that people want to participate in the debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will try to take the high road. The Bloc Québécois is used to being the adult in the room.

This evening, those who are watching at home are seeing two parties sling mud at each other and accusing each other of having the most scandals to its name. That is what our democracy looks like in 2024 with these two parties that are both hoping to govern.

I have a clear and simple question for my colleague. There is one party that people can trust. It is a party that does not have a long list of scandals to its name. That is the Bloc Québécois.

My colleague has been talking about common sense. I would like it if he could tell us that the Bloc Québécois is made up of people who can be trusted. We are not here to try to govern. People can trust us, and we will ensure that these people steer clear of any scandals.

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do want to acknowledge that we on this side of the House do want to govern. We do want to bring fiscal accountability and common sense and trust back into the stewardship of our government finances. I will take the member at his word that he also will support efforts to bring back trusted stewardship to public finances and to get to the bottom of all of these scandals. I appreciate the sentiments that he has expressed.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to comment that continuing this debate to bring these documents forward, to demand that the Prime Minister provide the documents, is the business of His Majesty's loyal opposition. We will continue until they provide the documents or until a carbon tax election is called.

Given that there are so many cases of conflict of interest in SDTC, and that it funnelled money to its own companies, should it be made to pay back the money so that other companies, which legitimately qualified and for which the program did run well for many years until the government took over, can get the money and get their businesses and technology off the ground?

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I have been admonished by the Speaker for being too long-winded, so let me just say yes, but—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think that the good Canadian citizens watching the debate at home, or here in the gallery, would be forgiven if they thought, listening to my colleague from Chatham-Kent—Leamington's speech, that the motion were somehow about getting the documents. The motion is a very good one. It has nothing to do with getting the documents; it has to do with referring to committee the matter of the Liberals' refusal to give the documents. At committee, I assume we could get some answers for Canadians about the scandal. That seems like important work to me.

It reminds me of a quote from *Jerry Maguire*: “You had me at ‘hello’.” We want to vote on the Conservatives' motion to send the matter off to committee, hold some hearings and get the answers. Why do they seem so insistent on not taking “yes” for an answer? How many times are we going to have to stand here and say, “You had us at ‘hello’.” Let us go to committee. Show me the money.” That is right: Show me the committee and let us get the answers for Canadians as soon as possible.

Why do Canadians have to wait, through this circus of a debate, to get the answers they so rightly deserve?

Privilege

• (1825)

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me correctly, and this is going back a week or more, the Speaker's ruling was to turn over all the documents. We are here because the government has not turned over all the documents. That is the business of the House and the business of the loyal opposition. We do want justice for Canadian taxpayers. We are not directing the RCMP what to do with those documents; that is not our place. However, the Speaker, not His Majesty's loyal opposition, has ordered the handing over of all the documents. That is what we are doing here.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his fine speech and congratulate him on being the favourite MP of the Speaker's sister-in-law. That is a great honour that I am sadly not fortunate enough to have.

At the beginning of his speech, he reminded us that the Chrétien government set up 15 or so foundations like this one. To me, there is a design flaw to these foundations. In other words, the government puts all kinds of money into foundations without any oversight. This was done voluntarily. This invites potential wrongdoing, as seems to have happened here.

In 2005, auditor general Sheila Fraser wrote a scathing report on this approach. Is it not time to put an end to these foundations and their design flaws?

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, the question is in a similar vein as the one the member's colleague asked. What the member is asking for are proper processes with proper oversight and proper accountability. Absent in the government has been any sort of government ministerial accountability. Should there be proper processes in place so funds are not misappropriated? I absolutely, fully agree with that. I can count on, on the basis of the two interventions from my Bloc friends, their supporting the next government as it puts the proper processes in place.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that we are here today discussing this privilege motion, which has effectively paralyzed Parliament because the Liberals refuse to give up unredacted documents because they are afraid of what those say. Frankly, they are fully aware of what they say. If they were not concerned about the contents of the documents, they would have allowed us to resume the work of the House many days ago and would have kept a consistent story. It has been quite interesting, actually, how many different stories we have heard from the government on this.

I had a really cool conversation this summer with someone, and they explained to me that they were a business owner with a couple of different businesses. There were some complications, and they had a family member who got sick. After their family member got sick, they decided that they were going to hire an employee to handle a bunch of the books. They hired someone they already had on staff whom they thought they could trust because they were a family friend. However, over the course of more than a year of employment, this family friend, who was an employee, siphoned off cash from the business.

Privilege

This was not a small amount of cash; it was actually quite a large amount of money. They were trying to figure out why their GST numbers were not balancing at the end of the year, so they had an accountant look into it further. As they started to dig through it, they realized that the employee had siphoned off a large amount of money and were faced with a dilemma. This was a family friend and an employee who had been with them for a while, but this was a large amount of money they needed to recover.

They decided they had one of two options, so they went to this employee with the two options: either the employee paid back this money or the employee could deal with the RCMP and they would go to small claims court. They said that if the employee paid them back, they would just pretend it was all good. The employee would no longer work for them regardless, but those were the options. I remember hearing this story and thinking at the time that it was really heartbreaking because their child was sick and they admitted they lost a bit of oversight over their business because they were focused on other things.

It is clear that the Minister of Industry, as he has even said, did not sufficiently monitor the contracts. Well, that is his job. The minister's job is to make sure that the government's money is being spent properly. He does not have the excuse of a sick kid taking over his contracts or his ability to do his job. He is in this job. This was his responsibility.

The NDP-Liberal government continues to put up different arguments about how we are violating charter rights, saying that somehow the right to misappropriate government money while Liberal insiders get rich is worth more than the constitutional rights conferred on Parliament to have these documents. We have seen this multiple times after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government. The list of scandals, as many of my colleagues have listed off, is large. There are so many scandals at this point that it is hard to keep them straight.

I will get into a space that I think is really important. It does not matter what happened. The Liberals know that people got rich and got money through conflicts of interest that they should not have had, and they refuse to provide documents to the RCMP. They are the employers, and this is perhaps the ideological difference between Conservatives and Liberals. We believe that every single person who works for the Government of Canada or a subsidiary of the Government of Canada is an employee of the Canadian people. As the representatives of the Canadian people, when Parliament votes and decides that we must have documents to send to the RCMP, the Government of Canada is acting on behalf of its employers, who are the Canadian people.

• (1830)

It appears that the Liberals believe that the employer is the Liberal Party of Canada, and that unless the Liberal Party of Canada says that it is okay, they are going to continue to block these documents from being released. However, they did release some of them, which is the interesting part of this. The production order had a whole list of documents, and the Liberals complied with a part of it, but it was heavily redacted. They effectively took a big, black permanent marker and crossed out large sections.

As every single different argument has been put forward by the government, I am assuming that I have some understanding as to possibly what is right and what is wrong, but the reality is that they are hiding. Like any parent will say, the most nervous a parent gets is when their child goes quiet and hides, because they know that there is possibly going to be a good answer, but 99% of the time it is going to be something really bad, or something that is going to require a lot of cleanup. What this government is doing by blocking and refusing to comply with this order shows that it is afraid of what those results are. The Liberals are the only ones who know what those unredacted documents look like. If they thought they were okay and that there was no problem, they would just turn them over to the RCMP.

We are not saying, "Give me, the member of Parliament for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, these documents that have potentially personnel information and private information." We are not saying to hand it over to every single parliamentarian. We are asking to have them unredacted and sent to the RCMP so that if there is a problem, the RCMP has all of the available information, can look into it and potentially go after that. That is the crux of this issue. The fact is that the Liberals continue to fight. I ask: Why is this a problem?

The Auditor General found that this government has turned this into a complete and total slush fund. There was \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or development of any green technology. So, that is \$58 million to completely ineligible projects that were connected to Liberals. Then there was another \$334 million, over 186 cases, to projects for which board members held a conflict of interest. So, \$334 million and 186 cases where groups that had conflicts of interest got money. There was \$58 million to projects that did not ensure that contribution agreements and terms were met. This is not just incompetence; this is negligence. It is approaching fraud, if it is not already at fraud. This is very troubling.

We have Canadians right now who are lining up at food banks, who are having a hard time putting groceries in their shopping carts and putting food on the table to feed their families. We have families who never thought they would need a food bank lining up at food banks and having to eat that piece of humble pie so that their children get meals. We have people who are skipping meals in Canada because of out-of-control inflation, out-of-control interest rates, and because, after nine years of this Liberal-NDP government, everything has become broken. Their out-of-control spending has led to ever-increasing inflation.

I often think about inflation, because my dad used to talk about how things were so inexpensive when he was little. Basically, during my entire childhood, a chocolate bar was the same price from when I was like four years old, when I remember going to the grocery or convenience store and getting a chocolate bar, to when I was an adult at 16 years old and working in a convenience store for the first time. So, when my dad used to say, “This used to cost 25¢ when I was a kid”, it made me think that he was really old, only to realize that he lived through wild inflationary times and out-of-control interest rates that impacted the cost of living for his generation, which made it really difficult for people in his generation to initially buy a house.

• (1835)

In fact, when my dad bought his first house, he told me, interest rates were 18%, and that was because of the fiscal policies of Pierre Trudeau. My dad was lucky to have a good job in Fort McMurray and managed to save money while renting a house until he could pay cash for a house, which is something no one can even imagine as feasible today because the cost of living is so high.

Most young people today do not even see themselves being able to save up enough money for a down payment on a house, and that is because of the absolute train wreck of fiscal policies of the Liberal-NDP government. Time and time again, the government continues to fail Canadians. Its job is to look out for Canadians' best interests, and yet here we have yet another example of extreme incompetence, or worse.

We have a minister who did not sufficiently monitor contracts that were given to Liberal insiders. I really question whether the Liberals are being serious about what their job is. We have been very clear on this side. Every single Conservative speech has asked that they release the documents to the RCMP so we can go back to our next piece of business here. The fact that they continue to block any possibility of this moving forward is part of the problem.

So many whistle-blowers came forward. It was not that the government found this out through government audits. This was found because of a whole bunch of whistle-blowers and the diligent work of my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets going through the books. The part that really is frustrating to a lot of Canadians is that \$334 million and 186 different conflict of interest cases should be enough to stop everything. However, with the Liberals, it is just enough for them to keep going and pat themselves on the back for all of their successes, that if they just taxed people a little more, it would stop forest fires, and if they just did a little more, somehow everything would get better.

Canadians know the way to make life better is to have a carbon tax election and elect a common-sense Conservative government that can get our economy back on track. After nine years, Canadians have had more than enough of the NDP-Liberal government spending their children's and grandchildren's futures into absolute poverty.

I am very proud to be here today as a member of His Majesty's loyal opposition, a position that means holding the government to account. Conservatives are not oppositional for the sake of opposition. We are charged, through our parliamentary system, with holding the government accountable for its actions. Right now, it is not

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showing any accountability or transparency, nor is it showing Canadians the work they deserve. I and many of my colleagues will continue the charge to hold the government accountable on this failed policy and these failed spaces.

• (1840)

The Deputy Speaker: Having reached the expiry of the time provided for today's debate, the House will resume consideration of the privilege motion at the next sitting of the House.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to rise in this place, and tonight I am here to talk about an unsatisfactory response to a question. That is what we do at the late show.

It was on May 10. Actually, I will back it up. On April 1, the government raised rents for Canadian Armed Forces personnel who live on base. It raised the rents on base housing. This was at a time of an affordability crisis for all Canadians, a housing crisis that exists all across Canada, and a crisis of morale, recruitment and retention within the Canadian Armed Forces, which has left the Canadian Armed Forces with 16,000 vacancies. Because of this, the defence committee actually moved a motion unanimously and reported back to the House asking the government to reverse the rent increase.

The motion was to not proceed with the rent increase, but it was on May 10 that I asked the government if they would, given the unanimous report from the defence committee, along with the general crisis of recruitment, retention and morale in the Canadian Armed Forces, and the crisis of housing across Canada that affects all Canadians, reverse the rent increase that the government placed on our Canadian Armed Forces personnel on base.

The response that I got from the government during that afternoon question period was a non-answer. The parliamentary secretary did not answer the question at all. She went on kind of an arrogant rant about not taking lessons from the other side on the Canadian Armed Forces, so she did not answer the question. She just deflected and ignored it, but it is worth returning to the point that the defence committee itself, of which that parliamentary secretary is a member, unanimously voted to call on the government to not increase the rent on the forces personnel.

However, the parliamentary secretary can actually be heard at the meeting instructing her own side to just vote for the motion, saying that it was not binding as it just gets reported to the House and that it did not really mean anything.

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This is the level of doublespeak that we see from members of the Liberal caucus. They will literally vote at a committee to urge their government to take a particular course of action, but just shrug their shoulders and know that it is not binding and that the government will not do it. It does not hurt them to unanimously vote. They would not have the courage to oppose the motion if they actually agreed that it was only fair to raise the rent on our troop. Instead, they went ahead with that.

There is a cost-of-living crisis in this country, and it affects the members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We are down 16,000 personnel. There are 10,000 more who are undertrained. These are the best of the best. I have met our troops. I have seen them deployed, and they just want to serve. They are the best, and they are let down by the government constantly.

This base rent increase might seem like a trivial matter. It might seem small, but it is not, and the government could signal to the forces members that they support them by not increasing their rent.

• (1845)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to how we are supporting our Canadian Armed Forces members.

Let us be quite strong in saying that I think, collectively, that the member opposite and I believe that CAF members are the backbone of our defence team. They are responsible for defending us, our values and our country. It is our responsibility as elected officials to eliminate as many unnecessary challenges as possible for CAF members and their families, such as by ensuring that, when military families relocate, they do not face additional and unnecessary burdens because they are dedicating themselves to serving our country.

[Translation]

We are committed to supporting members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families so they can have affordable, safe and comfortable housing. We have a variety of initiatives and investments under way to meet the housing needs of Canadian Armed Forces members and their families.

[English]

We are already committed to investing \$475 million over 10 years to build and renovate military housing across our country. This funding will help support our plan to construct approximately 650 new units over the next five years on bases with the greatest housing demands, such as Borden, Esquimalt and Gagetown. However, we know that more needs to be done. That is why, through Canada's updated defence policy, "Our North, Strong and Free", we are committing an additional \$295 million over the next 20 years to the military housing portfolio. This funding gives us the resources to continue building and upgrading existing housing. It would also help us establish a Canadian Armed Forces housing strategy to guide our housing efforts in both the short term and the long term in order to help CAF members and their families.

[Translation]

Child care services are another critical factor. I heard it mentioned a lot while I was touring the military bases. Child care is a priority for military families.

In our defence policy update, we invested \$100 million to improve access to affordable, on-base child care. These investments will enable the Government of Canada to provide Canadian Armed Forces members and their families with affordable, safe, and comfortable housing now and in the years to come.

The Government of Canada has also put a number of safeguards in place to ensure that members of the Canadian Armed Forces pay fair and equitable rents across Canada, whether they live on or off base. For example, the Canadian Forces housing agency reviews and adjusts housing costs annually to reflect changes in the local rental market.

[English]

The Canadian Armed Forces housing strategy has also placed a 25% cap, based on gross household income, for CAF members currently living in military housing.

To become more responsive to the needs of CAF members, last July, our government replaced the post living differential, the PLD, with the new Canadian Forces housing differential, the CFHD.

I can go on and speak about the initiatives that we are taking, but I also want to take this opportunity, as always, to thank the wonderful people here in Canada. I want to thank our members and their families for their efforts here at home and also abroad. I know we will be there supporting them.

• (1850)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, in May, I asked the parliamentary secretary if the government would reverse the rent increase, yes or no? She did not answer the question then. I have repeated and revisited the question. She spoke for four minutes without answering it. Therefore, we will just take it as no: The government is not interested in reversing the rent increase it placed on the CAF. Fine, that is its choice. It comes amid a recruitment and retention crisis, in which we have repeatedly heard at committee that the horrific condition of base housing is a factor in people leaving the forces. She spoke in her remarks about the commitment to build 600 units over five years. There are 7,000 people on a waiting list right now for housing. That answer is not going to cut it.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I smile because I am trying not to be too political here on the late show.

This is about sending a clear message to our Canadian Armed Forces that we have its back and will continue to invest. We understand the challenges it is facing, and we will deliver on our initiative to improve the housing conditions on military bases.

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise on behalf of the over-taxed people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Like the over-taxed Canadians across the country, residents of the Ottawa Valley want a carbon tax election now.

The socialist-separatist coalition has made its position plain for all to see: There will be no relief for Canadians until the Marxist members secure their pensions. The need for an election and an end to the wacko government has never been greater. The government has lost touch with real Canadians. Just look at how the minister responded to my question last June about scrapping the carbon tax. Instead of defending the carbon tax, the minister tried to “change the channel” by bragging about the Liberals' higher capital gains tax. Canadians are angry about higher taxes and the Liberals' bold new policy is to increase taxes.

The Liberals have adopted the motto “Beatings will continue until morale improves.” The taxes will go higher until their polls improve. The government has lost touch with reality. Its members have trapped themselves inside a simulation. That is not a reference to *The Matrix* or a metaphor.

Statistics Canada built a tax simulator; anyone can download it for free. It is widely used by academics, banks, businesses, parliamentary budget officers and even the finance department. It simulates the impact of tax changes. The Liberals put their carbon tax in the simulator and it spit out the number 80/20. The simulator said that 20% of Canadians would pay more in carbon taxes than they receive in climate bribes. The simulator said those 20% were mostly the top 20% of income earners. Any time a simulator spits out a ratio like 80/20, it should set off alarm bells. 80/20 has its own Wikipedia page for a reason.

These technocratic-loving Liberals forget that sometimes a statistic can be both accurate and true while being completely fictional and entirely false. There is a good chance the parliamentary secretary who was selected to respond shortly was handed a speech that includes a phrase like, “The average household gets back more than it pays.”

In Canada, the size of the average household is 2.51 people. I do not need to conduct a door-to-door census to tell members there is not a single household with that number of people in it. The Liberals will tell us the average household is doing great under the carbon tax, that the average household gets back more than they pay. The problem is that the average household of 2.51 people does not exist. It is a statistical fiction, just like the government's mandate.

More Canadians voted for Conservatives in the last two elections than voted for the Liberals, yet these Liberals have arrogantly behaved as if they won a majority. They kept increasing the carbon tax. They have increased taxes on property and capital. They tax our work. They tax our energy. If we try to catch a break to relax, they increased the taxes on alcohol, tobacco and cannabis too. We

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cannot even watch a movie without paying their Netflix tax now. Just to rub the salt into the wound a little harder, on top of the Liberal carbon tax, the video streaming tax, the beer tax and the new digital services tax is the GST, because nothing says Liberal like charging a tax on a tax.

If there was ever any doubt the Liberals are out of touch, I expect this parliamentary secretary to put those doubts to rest. They will either invoke the simulation to claim the fictional average household is doing great, or they will resort to climate alarmism and try to convince Canadians higher taxes will fix the bad weather. Maybe they might even do both, but that proves they do not listen to Canadians.

It is time for a carbon tax election now.

● (1855)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the member gets a gold star, because she actually mentioned something so important: The average household gets back more than it pays.

The Conservatives seem to be obsessed with the idea of a secret cover-up, but there is none. We have always fully cooperated with the Parliamentary Budget Officer and will always do so. Our government has been clear: The vast majority of Canadians receive more money back in their pockets with the Canada carbon rebate. The member just said it. I am so happy that she knows this.

We are responding to the growing climate emergency the world is now facing, and Canadians are seeing it as well. From wildfires to increasingly frequent heat waves, floods, droughts and hurricanes, Canadians are becoming increasingly aware that we need to take climate action now. Carbon pricing is an essential start-up to curb emissions, because it cannot be free to pollute.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's analysis of Canada's carbon pollution pricing system confirmed that the majority of households receive more in Canada carbon rebate payments than they face in direct costs due to pricing. Low- and medium-income households benefit the most. This is so important: Anyone who lives in a rural area or a smaller community receives a 20% top-up to their Canada carbon rebate, reflecting the fact that they may face higher costs and have fewer short-term options to reduce their emissions.

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Do not take our word for it. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has explained that carbon pricing contributes no more than 0.15% of inflation per year, a tiny fraction of the high inflation we have seen. Economists estimate that carbon pricing contributes, at most, just 0.33% of grocery price increases.

Putting a price on carbon pollution is a proven method of reducing carbon emissions, and it continues to be the simplest, most effective way to fight climate change. That is exactly what we are doing. Unlike the Conservative Party, we are focused on proven, evidence-based solutions to the most pressing issue facing Canadians. The federal government released Canada's 2024 national inventory report, which shows that Canada is on track to meet our emission-reducing goals for 2026, and also on track for 2030.

Carbon pricing works, and it has been shown to be the most cost-effective way of fighting climate change. The opposition clearly is not interested in what we have to say, but would they listen to Premier Moe? In May 2023, Premier Moe said that Saskatchewan actually considered alternatives to the federal carbon pricing but found that they were all too costly.

Our government is committed to taking action on climate change, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, we need a dump truck to remove all the trash I just heard. Conservatives do not support the Liberal carbon tax. Provinces do not support the Liberal carbon tax. Canadians do not support the Liberal carbon tax. Even the tax-happy socialists in the NDP do not support the carbon tax. Canadians are not as stupid as Liberals think they are.

Unlike the government, Canadians know how far they drive to work, how much they spent in gas last week and how much they paid to heat their home. Canadians know they pay more in carbon taxes, because they passed math class, unlike the government, which struggles to put two and two together. Unlike the Liberals, common-sense Conservatives will listen to Canadians and axe the tax. It is time to have a carbon tax election.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, let me say that, as a government, we remain committed to fighting climate change while putting more money back in the pockets of Canadians. Experts agree that putting a price on pollution is the most cost-effective way of fighting climate change. Climate change is real, and unlike the Conservatives, who are trying to avoid the conversation on the world stage, we as a government have a plan and will continue to deliver on our plan to fight climate change and bring real measures of help to Canadians.

● (1900)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here I am again at the end of the night, the last person here, fighting again for coastal people. Well, it is me, you and the parliamentary secretary, but I would rather be doing other work.

For three years, the Liberal government has allowed a company in Union Bay to break apart not a boat but a massive ship that is extended into the water, over the high tide line, and onto land. This would not be allowed anywhere in the world. Even countries that have extremely poor environmental regulations, like Bangladesh,

would not allow this type of activity. It is unbelievable that this company is breaking apart a boat that has contaminants in it without a self-contained floating dry dock.

Something we can do in Canada is break apart ships in a responsible way, and there are companies doing that. I am going to talk a bit about those companies, but they are doing it in the right way because they are following the rules. When a company breaks the rules, we would think the federal government would enforce the regulations we have in place or, if we did not have regulations, would create them, but not in this case.

This company in Union Bay is in operation despite the objections of the Province of British Columbia, which has issued two abatement orders, and local communities. The Comox Valley Regional District has an injunction against the company to stop its harmful activity. They are waiting for a court date. The Tla'amin, the Qualicum people and the Comox people have all voiced their opposition to what is taking place. As I said, nowhere in the world would anyone allow this type of activity.

When I brought this question to the House in June, the provincial government at the time had issued an abatement order because the company was discharging effluent at 15 times the limit for copper. When I raised this question earlier in the week, it was because the province issued a second abatement order. This time it was 100 times the limit for copper and 13 times the limit for zinc. The Liberals say the federal government's baseline is not as low as the province's, but is it 100 times lower than the province's when it comes to copper and 13 times lower for zinc? Is that what we are dealing with?

This is absolutely absurd. What is it going to take for the federal government to finally step in? I have asked the minister about this, and her reply is that she is dealing with it; it is an abandoned and derelict vessel and she is getting good at that. She cites the ocean protection plan. This is not an abandoned and derelict vessel. This is a massive ship being deconstructed.

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I want to highlight a couple of things. There is a lot I have to say on this and I will keep coming back if I have to. There was some lobbying done by Seaspan. We would think a reputable company would be concerned about all levels of government being concerned about this operation. We found out through an FOI request that it lobbied the province, and the owners of this company, as far as I know from the research we have done, are foreign owners.

We know the Liberals and the Conservatives are corporate-controlled parties, but the depth of this is deeply concerning. Is this what is going on? Is Seaspan putting pressure on the federal government so that it does not take action? Is that what is happening? Coastal people deserve to know.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. Certainly, when I think about the seriousness, I want to make sure I respond accordingly.

The Government of Canada recognizes that safe recycling processes are vital to ensuring the careful and secure handling of environmentally hazardous substances such as asbestos, heavy metals, hydrocarbons and ozone-depleting substances. Canada aims to ensure that ships are recycled safely at the end of their operational lives without causing unnecessary risk to human health and the environment. Ship recycling in Canada is recognized as the most environmentally sound method to dispose of ships that have reached their end of life. Many provisions affecting ship-recycling facilities are governed by the provinces and territories, such as environmental and waste management and workplace occupational health and safety.

Overall, Canada has some of the strongest laws and regulations across federal, provincial, territorial and municipal jurisdictions, and we remain committed to working with all levels of government to make sure Canada's ship-recycling facilities remain among the safest in the world. The Canadian Coast Guard has received numerous inquiries about vessels that are intended for deconstruction at the Deep Water Recovery recycling site in Union Bay.

The Coast Guard has undertaken several assessments of the area where the vessels are awaiting deconstruction at Deep Water Recovery. If pollution enters the marine environment from a land-based spill, the Coast Guard will report the pollution to the emergency management ministry in British Columbia and provide assistance as required. The Coast Guard has reminded the deconstruction company of its responsibility under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, to prevent any release of oil or other pollutants from reaching the marine environment.

The Government of Canada is taking actions to reduce the number of vessels of concern in Canadian waters and minimize their impact on coastal communities, the environment and the public. Under the oceans protection plan, as of January 2024, the Government of Canada has removed 584 wrecked, abandoned or hazardous vessels across Canada. The Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act was adopted in 2018 and came into force in 2019.

The objectives of the act are to strengthen owner accountability and to enable more proactive government action to address the risks posed by problem vessels. Under the Wrecked, Abandoned or Haz-

ardous Vessels Act, an owner is prohibited from allowing their vessel to become a wreck due to failing to maintain it. Under Canadian law, vessel owners are responsible for their vessels at all times. They must take all actions necessary, including repair, salvage and prevention or cleanup of leaking fuel and oil. Vessel owners must contact the Coast Guard if their vessel is sinking, has sunk or is a threat to discharge marine pollution.

When it comes to this, we will continue to be good stewards for protection of the environment and our marine life.

● (1905)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, the oceans protection plan they are talking about sure is not protecting Union Bay or Baynes Sound, which produces 50% of B.C.'s shellfish. It is like some kind of bad joke. This is not about abandoned and derelict vessels. This is a massive ship being broken apart in the water, on the high tide line, on the shore. This is a massive boat without a self-contained floating dry dock. This is insanity.

This is not about safety and the strongest laws in the world, which is what the parliamentary secretary just talked about. Is she kidding? Has anyone from the government actually gone there to see this and meet with the first nations and local governments?

This is producing 100 times the copper effluent, 13 times the zinc, according to a provincial abatement issued. The corporate influence is what is going on. The government needs to respond to the people of Union Bay and of coastal British Columbia and of Vancouver Islanders, especially. It needs to show up.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not take this as a joke. I am sorry to hear the member feels this way, and I want to thank him for his advocacy.

Ship recycling is a complex multinational industry. It has also been a growing area of focus for the International Maritime Organization, which has been working over the course of the last two decades to support safe, environmentally sound ship recycling worldwide. Canada maintains some of the strongest rules globally for ship recycling, and as a member state of the International Maritime Organization, Canada has contributed to the important work to improve ship-recycling practices worldwide.

As the government has stated before, many of the legislative provisions that govern safe and environmentally responsible ship recycling fall under provincial jurisdiction. We are committed to working with provinces and territories to ensure that we have the safest recycling facilities in the world.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[Translation]*

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands ad-

journed until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:09 p.m.)

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